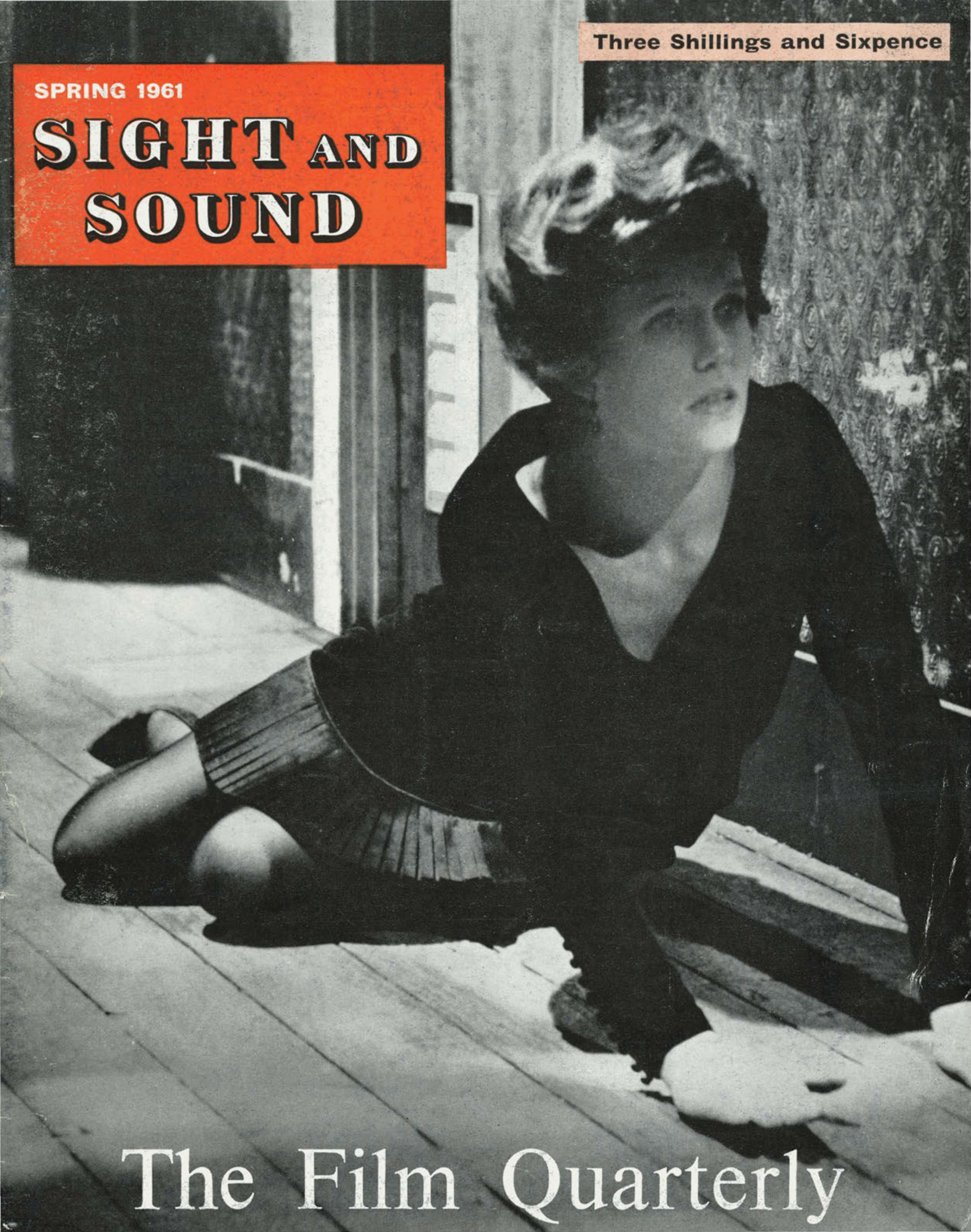


Three Shillings and Sixpence

SPRING 1961

# SIGHT AND SOUND



## The Film Quarterly

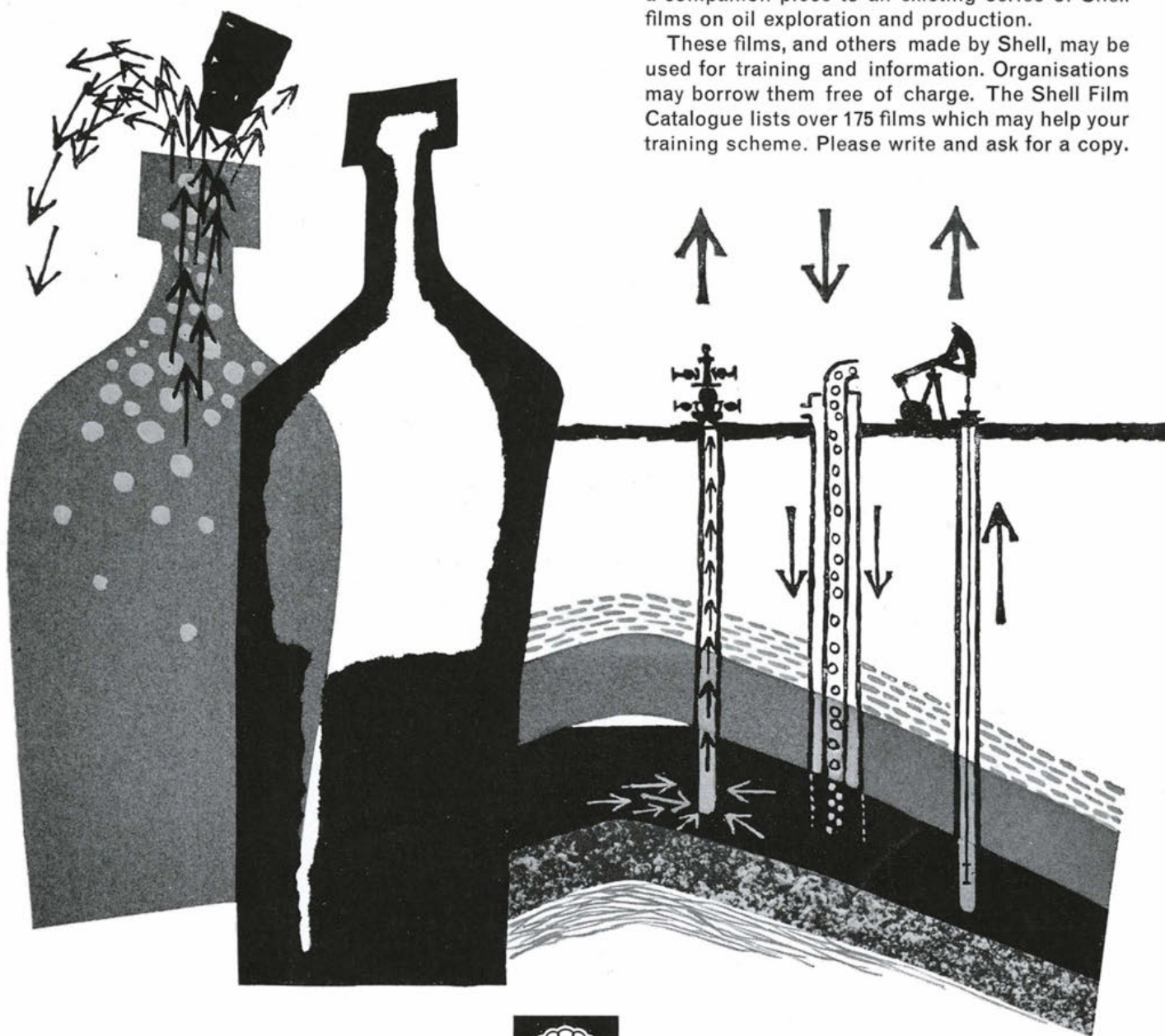


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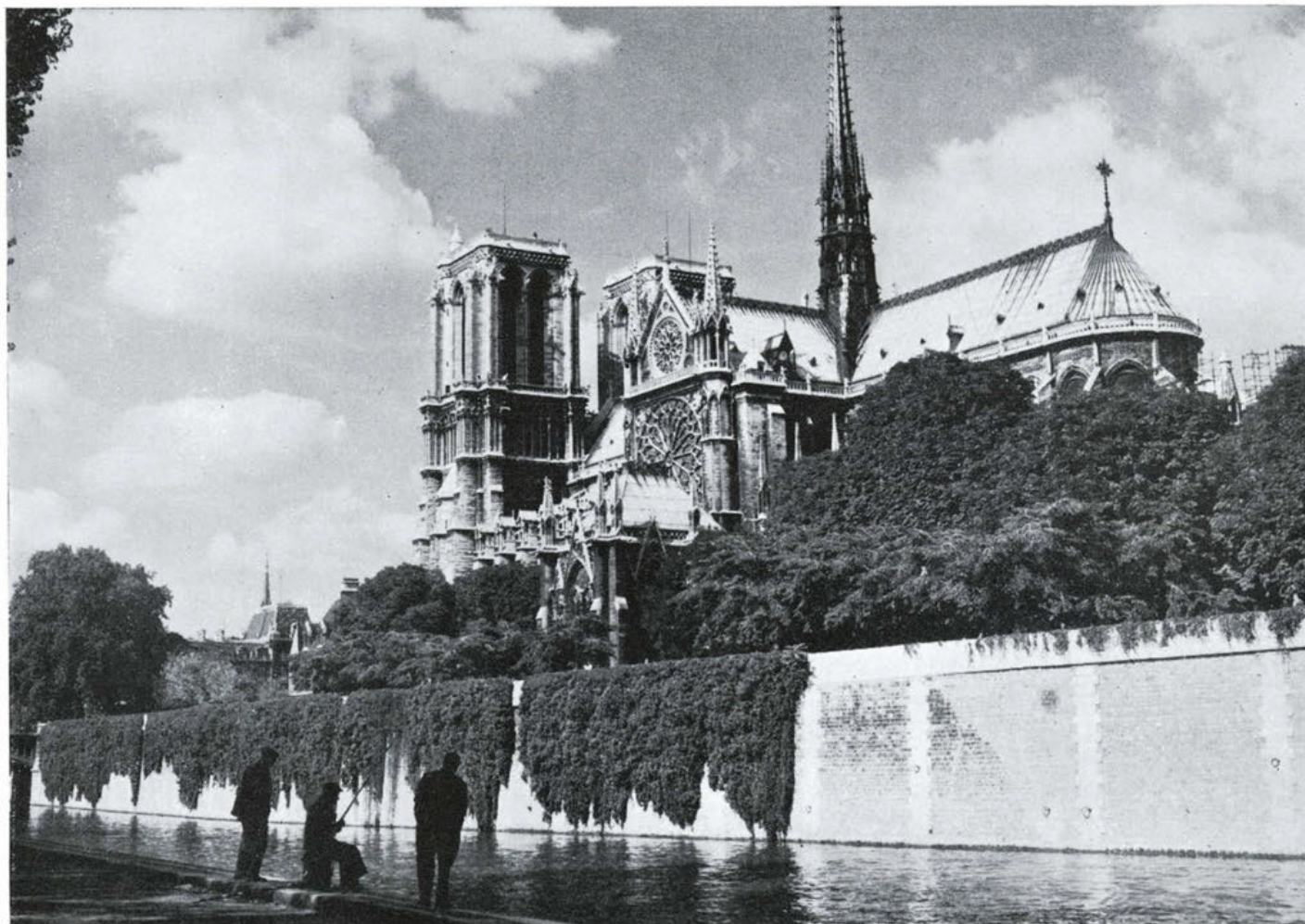


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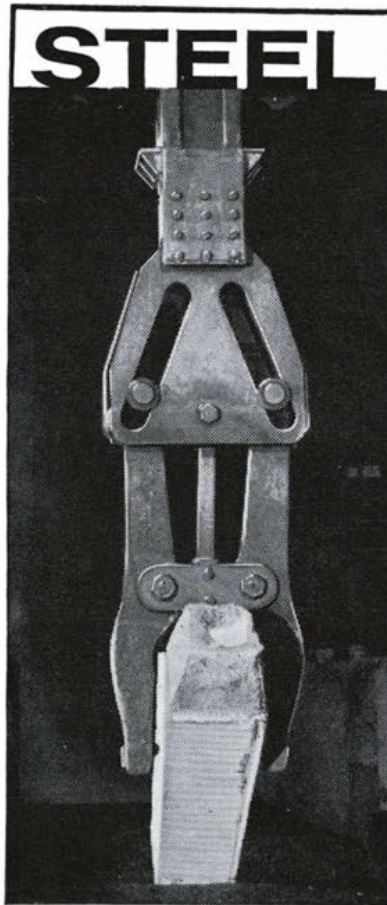
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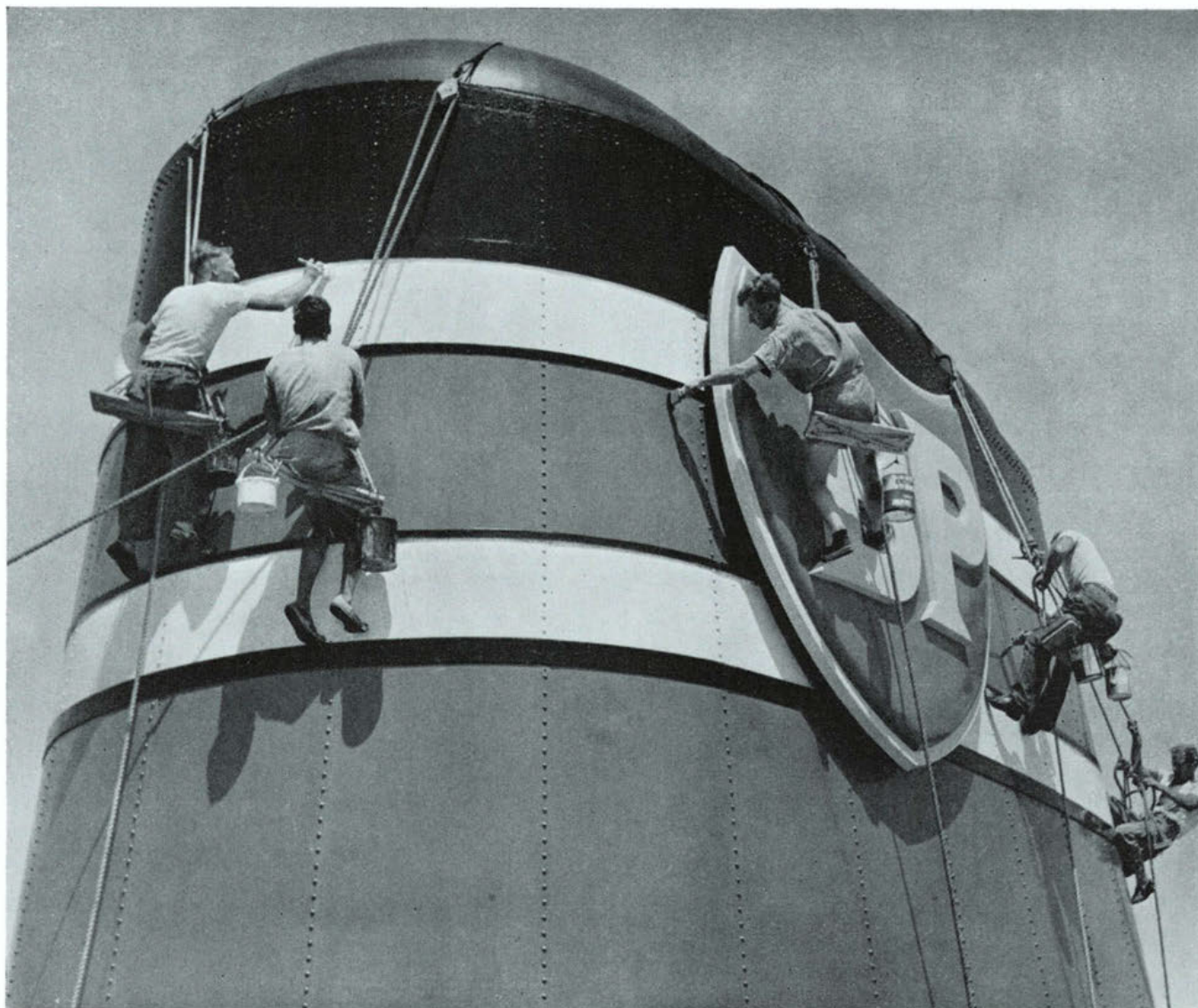
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# SIGHT AND SOUND

The International Film Quarterly

VOLUME 30 No. 2 SPRING 1961

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Deborah Kerr and Megs Jenkins, governess and housekeeper in Jack Clayton's *"The Innocents"*, adapted from *"The Turn of the Screw"*.



# THE FRONT PAGE

PAY TELEVISION, WHICH HAS been just over the horizon for several years, seems to be moving rapidly nearer as a practical proposition. An article on a later page outlines one of the systems and how it could work in this country. But there remain large areas for speculation, dependent on two as yet unknown factors: the conditions under which the government would licence a Pay TV system (if they were prepared to licence it at all) and the degree of public support and enthusiasm Pay TV could expect.

Generally speaking, it seems to be agreed that pay television could show three types of programme. By reason of its (assumed) superior buying power, it could offer its public special attractions—anything from a championship fight to an evening with a highly priced singer or comedian, to a complete West End musical—at present beyond the reach of television. It could show films, conceivably first-run, certainly second-run, and in any case more commercially alluring than some of the ageing material on which TV currently has to rely. And it could cater, in ways as yet hardly explored, for minority audiences and special interests, giving time to things as various as ballet and language lessons, hobbies and more informed discussions on political or arts subjects.

In fact, Pay TV might well find itself doing all three things, in varying degrees. The special attractions, by their very nature, would remain occasional. There simply isn't enough talent around for Pay TV to provide some superlative piece of mass entertainment, outside the range of the existing television services, every day or every week. Films would be an obvious source of programmes, the idea being that Pay TV would run a feature for several consecutive evenings and so function as a kind of home cinema. But even here, and even assuming full co-operation from the industry and a reversal of the exhibitors' present policy of keeping films off television, the supply of really attractive material would not be limitless. To fill up the time (even though it would broadcast considerably fewer hours a day than the regular channels), would Pay TV show detective and Western series on film, hoping that the public might be induced to pay for something not very different from what the free channels are already supplying, or would it go all out to cultivate the minority interests, appealing to audiences which might be numbered only in hundreds of thousands, but audiences whose support could be relied on?

"For toll television, there should be a controlling body to make sure that the public interest (in this case the interest of the minorities) is served," Brian Inglis wrote some months ago in *The Spectator*. The Kinematograph Renters Society, in its submission to the Pilkington Committee, advocated a measure of government control. "In order to prevent another monopoly structure developing," it said, "air time should only be leased to potential providers of entertainment in units of programme length, and no air time should be leased on the basis of leasing either a whole day or a whole week." The Rank Organisation, while also backing pay television, took a different view in its submission, appealing for

"the freedom of the market place." This seems the main point at issue. Pay television, either through a wire or an air system, would involve a considerable capital investment. Could the money be recouped without going out all the time for the largest possible audience? Would the commercial companies be prepared to think in terms of minority interests, or could these interests be safeguarded only by government control?

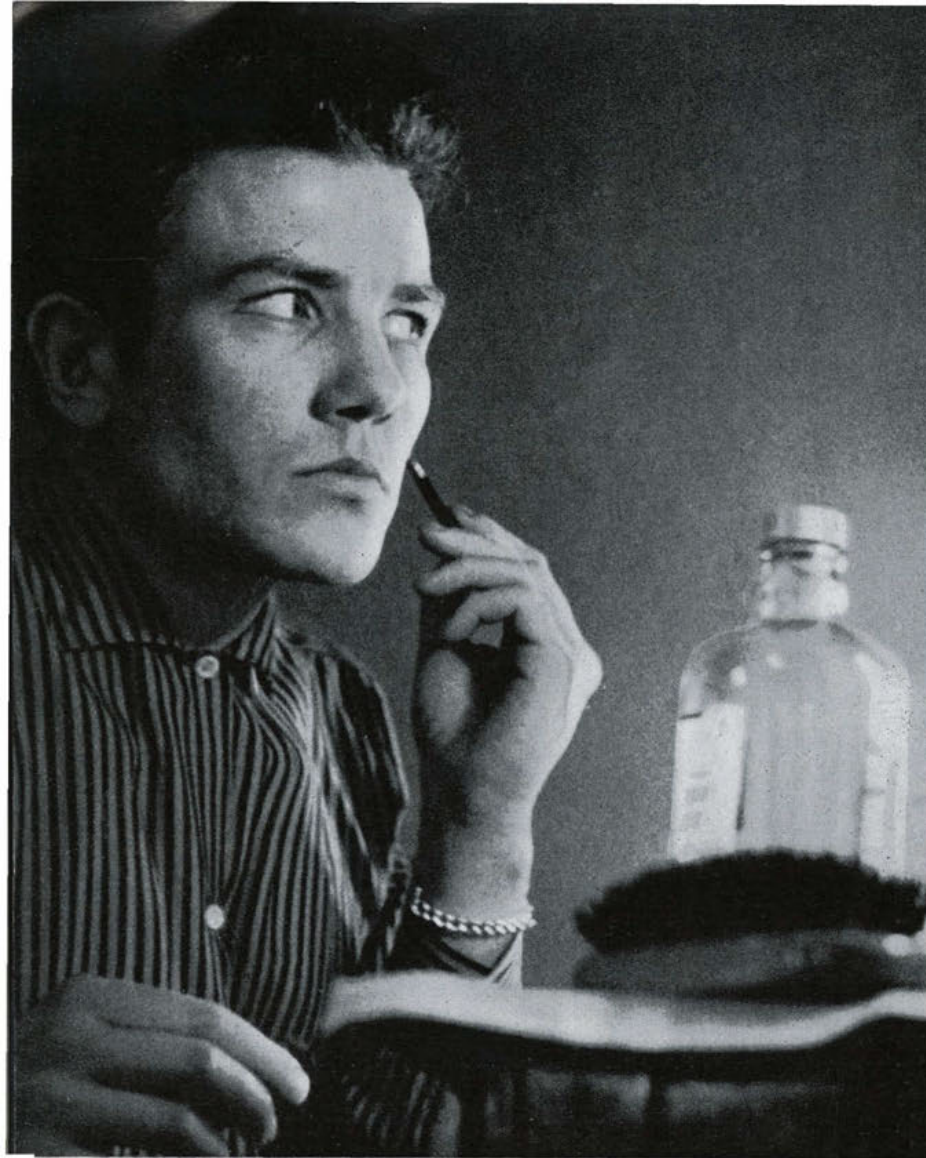
It could be argued, perhaps optimistically, that minority interests and commercial interests are not necessarily that far apart. Once the Pay TV equipment has been attached to a set (at only a small cost to the subscriber), the box-office has simply been transferred to the home. In direct competition with the regular television channels, Pay TV then has to induce us to pay out our shillings or half-crowns. On the assumption that people are not going to pay for something that the other channels are simultaneously offering them for nothing, and that films and special programmes can take up only a limited time, the cultivation of minorities would seem a logical way to fill both the time gap and the financial gap.

As far as the existing television services are concerned, it is difficult to see that the introduction of another competitor into the field could have anything but a good effect. Too much television is switched on simply because it is there and regarded as inescapable. Before paying out money most people would think twice, and the more critical attitudes inevitable when something has to be paid for might be carried over into ordinary television viewing. Pay television, to attract the public, has got to offer something that television at present doesn't; and ordinary television, to hold its public, will then have to compete.

The commercial companies, with larger potential resources to draw on, might find this easier than the BBC. And the BBC's attitude, says Brian Inglis, has been that of "a ferryman who, informed that a toll bridge may be built, turns down the opportunity to become toll-keeper on the grounds that a bridge would be bad for the ferry's trade." Public service broadcasting would clearly suffer if certain events which can now be seen free, from state occasions to the Grand National and the Boat Race, were handed over to pay television. But the government can be relied on to prevent this; and in fact the essence of any workable and acceptable system could only be that people are not deprived of something they are getting already, but that payment introduces a wider range of choice.

Behind the BBC's attitude, one senses a feeling that broadcasting *ought* to be free, a public service tradition which is opposed to the whole idea of payment. But the BBC still has to measure its own minority audience in terms of millions; it still has to cut political discussions short just as they begin to get interesting and to present arts features, on programmes such as *Monitor*, in a highly compressed form. Given reasonable safeguards, Pay TV seems a short-cut approach to the whole problem of minority television. And this is a problem, it increasingly appears, which television as a whole must face if it is going really to develop.





# ALBERT FINNEY

and

# MARY URE

# TALKING ABOUT ACTING

*An edited transcript of a tape-recorded discussion between Mary Ure, Albert Finney and Louis Marcorelles.*

MARCORELLES: You've both acted for all three mediums—stage, screen and television. Which do you like best?

URE: Oh, the cinema! There's so much less in the way of outside distraction than there is in the theatre, and I find I get much more satisfaction out of cinema acting than from any kind of theatrical acting.

FINNEY: I really hate TV; I find that all distractions. But it's too early yet to say which of the others I prefer. My bit in *The Entertainer* only amounted to one night, and it was like a bad dream, really. I enjoyed doing *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* very much, the whole process of working in the cinema. But I also like the breadth and the dimensional aspect of the theatre, the sense of space and time . . . What I don't enjoy is re-creating the same thing eight times a week during a long run. Then the problem becomes one of keeping it fresh rather than acting: one's just concerned with looking spontaneous. You can see yourself putting the same glass down in the same place at the same time four months from now. That's ridiculous! Actors should be able to play more than one part in a week.

MARCORELLES: Do you mind, when you're playing a screen part, having as it were to splice your acting together?

URE: Not at all. In fact it can be a good deal more difficult in the theatre. The cinema takes much more out of you because more concentration is put into one single thing. Say you're doing a very difficult scene—your husband has been shot, for instance, and you have to walk into the room and find him—then everything about you, from your brain and emotions to





the way you speak, has to be tremendously concentrated. But I find that exciting.

MARCORELLES: Do you think film directors pay enough attention to the actor? Do they give you time to prepare your part and achieve the kind of concentration you want?

URE: I don't really think so. I've only done five films so far, and of course I don't know how they work in Europe. But I think the best thing would be to have a group of actors improvise round scenes, get to know each other, and then work the film through. That could be exciting.

FINNEY: Preparation's essential. Making a film involves such a long period of creation, and in theory at least the first day's shooting is intended to be part of the finished film. So it's important, even on the first day, that you should all know what you're aiming at. Of course you're bound to find out more about the subject as you work, but the more preparation you can do beforehand the better it is for everyone.

URE: But you ought not to work on the scenes themselves. I'd like to work round them, to get to know how the other actors and the director work, to get a feeling of everybody's attitude to the film. If you work too hard on a scene, though, I find the vitality just goes—at least it does for me.

FINNEY: Well, it doesn't for me because I like to know just what I want to achieve with a scene. I want the dress rehearsal, if you like, of a shot in a film to be as perfect as possible technically, and then when we're actually shooting it I like to be able to forget that side altogether. But in filming they never seem to rehearse enough: they're not that interested, so they treat it as a sort of joke.

URE: But you can over-rehearse.

FINNEY: Well, of course. It's a question of balance: all art is, in

any case. At the moment—I like to say at the moment, because I never know when my ideas may change—I believe very strongly in form. Improvisation can be dangerous, and I felt that about *Shadows*. After all, if you want to make a film about a certain subject you must also want certain things to emerge; and you can't just leave it to chance that those things are going to emerge in the right balance.

MARCORELLES: You get a good deal of improvisation in a film like Truffaut's *Tirez sur la Pianiste*. He wants his actors to show their characters through their nerves and their physical reactions as much as their dialogue, and he's not particularly strict about his text. What do you feel about this?

URE: I think it works. I felt *Tirez sur la Pianiste* was a remarkable personal statement, which every great film has to be; and it gave me the feeling of a progression in the cinema, some kind of advance.

FINNEY: I agree that Truffaut's feeling about his subject emerges very strongly, and of course this is what should happen. You ought to feel that the director is cajoling you, or bullying you, or seducing you into his attitude. At the same time, the conception of some of the performances seemed a bit untidy: they didn't communicate to me, and I felt that perhaps because of this freedom and improvisation they weren't always certain about just what they *meant* to communicate.

URE: But it was such a relief to find a film that didn't give you everything on a plate, all neatly worked out with a beginning and a middle and an end, and all technically perfect . . . You don't sense that Truffaut has a cameraman saying "You can't do *that*; it's too difficult," and a producer saying "You can't shoot *that*; it'll be too expensive." You feel he does exactly





"Billy Liar": Albert Finney and George A. Cooper.

what he wants; and if we had more directors in England who were in love with their subjects, and who felt that they had this kind of personal freedom, I think our cinema would be a very different thing.

MARCORELLES: In fact Truffaut's film was shot entirely outside the studio, on a small budget and with complete freedom. I was there, for instance, when he did one of the scenes between Aznavour and Nicole Berger, and he was alone with just the two actors and the cameraman.

URE: Well, of course, that's wonderful. And it's an enormous help to be in a real location. When we were doing the last scene in *Look Back in Anger*—the scene at the railway station where I meet Jimmy Porter again—we shot it at four o'clock in the morning and we did it in a single take. We couldn't possibly have managed that in a studio, without the help we got from the atmosphere, the smoke and the rain and the way the station felt.

FINNEY: In *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* I felt like that about the scenes where I was working at the lathe. I felt almost like a sculptor—working a real lathe, with real metal, and working it myself. It's wonderful for an actor to be able to pour his concentration into an actual object like this, until in a way it becomes part of him. I found that one of the most exciting things about filming.

MARCORELLES: I'd like here to bring in Brecht and the so-called Brechtian attitude, which means that you are very conscious about what you are doing and why you're doing it and also involves a certain sense of distance—the opposite, in a way, from Truffaut's method. Do you think this is just a matter of theory, or does it mean something for you in practical terms?

FINNEY: Well, I'm very consciously trying, as an actor, to keep myself free from theories. I'm very much concerned with the particular way I'm growing, with the way I think one thing one week and another thing next week. Of course I'm interested to read about theories, but I'm not too anxious to adopt them

or become too engrossed in them... The process of the emotional and mental growth of a part ought to combine very closely with the technical growth, and if one wants to communicate a certain effect or feeling, one has got in rehearsals to try to find the clearest way to achieve that cleanly. If you can manage that sort of perfection in rehearsal, then when you actually get in front of an audience, or when the cameras are rolling, you can give it the breath of life in the actual performing of it.

URE: I agree that it's essential for an actor to have read widely about all kinds of theories, but it's just as important for him to be adaptable. He ought at a moment's notice to be able to work in a completely different way because that's what an exciting director wants him to do. Perhaps a Brechtian director doesn't believe there is any other way.

MARCORELLES: You believe more in the kind of chance happening which may come up during the actual shooting.

URE: Of course it's important to rehearse properly, to know what you're doing in a scene. But in the cinema—and this is one of the reasons why I find such excitement in films—there is always the chance that something in a shot may go slightly wrong; and in that case you need this little bit of freedom just to give something truly creative. Surely this chance thing is terribly important: some of the best things in the cinema have come about by chance.

FINNEY: But if something goes wrong and you have to cope, for want of a better word, you can cope in a way which is good for the film or one which is bad for the film. Even if I'd only dropped a cup and saucer, for instance, I'd like to feel that the way I pick it up would be influenced by the fact that I was in the right rhythm of the scene.

URE: All the same, we're tending rather to generalise. There are certain scenes about which a director can say "This is exactly how I want it done," and you can't do it any other way. On the other hand, he might say to you: "All right. You've got a glass of water; you are feeling ill; it's night and you are going into this room... and now do what you want." I find this exciting.

MARCORELLES: You seem to have a lot of faith in improvisation. Yet when I watched you play *Antigone* on the stage, for instance, I felt you were giving a very highly concentrated performance and that every night you must be acting at virtually the same pitch.

URE: Certainly, because everything was completely fixed as it had to be. But that didn't stop us from improvising in some of the early scenes; and the improvisation uncovered certain feelings and attitudes in the characters for us.

FINNEY: Well, that's the advantage of improvisation. There may be certain scenes which are so written that points don't emerge clearly during rehearsal and improvisation can help to release them. Then you can appreciate whatever it was that was missing, and you carry that in your head into the text.

MARCORELLES: You seem to want to be secure, to leave nothing to chance, and I notice that you talk about acting mainly in terms of rehearsal, while Mary believes more in details that may arise during shooting. Is that right?

FINNEY: I think my job as an actor is to produce the effect, if you like, of improvisation in the final result. If improvisation seems more real than acting, it may be because people have been seeing such a lot of bad acting. And if actors look more spontaneous while they're improvising, perhaps it's because they are not very good actors... Acting is the craft of knowing exactly what you want to communicate and then making it spontaneous, making it seem just to happen. And you have to know exactly what second, I feel, is the best moment in a scene to put that cigarette out. But don't do it as though you were beating time, so that the audience can say "Oh yes, he's putting it out so that we'll realise he doesn't like her..." When you put life into it, everything should flow. That's our



craft, and that is also why I insist on the danger of improvisation. I don't like to feel that what the audience might respond to is something I haven't really intended.

URE: But you do intend it, you see . . .

FINNEY: When you improvise? But you can't intend an accident.

URE: It's not an accident. I'm not talking about making a completely improvised film, and in any case I don't believe that is possible, and I wouldn't want to act in it. But sometimes a thing may happen when you do a scene for the first time which couldn't happen the third or fourth time.

FINNEY: That's our job: to be able in some way, on the fourth take or for that matter the eleventh take, to keep the life in it.

MARCORELLES: Do you feel there is any basic difference in attitudes to the cinema between actors of your generation and stage actors of an older generation—people like Sir John Gielgud, for instance, and Peggy Ashcroft?

FINNEY: I've always felt strongly about the fact that the cinema in England has been regarded as a kind of hobby. An old actor who came to see *Billy Liar* asked me if I'd enjoyed doing *Saturday Night*. I said, "Yes, very much," and he said, "Well, they're all right for the money . . ." Of course acting in the cinema and in the theatre amount to completely different crafts, although the process of acting is to a certain extent within oneself the same. And I find that I simply enjoy acting, whether it's in a room on my own, or on a stage or in a studio: I enjoy assuming an emotion, acting with other people. So I can't feel about the cinema that it's just a sort of hobby which pays a little extra on the side, while the theatre is the place where I do my real prestige work. I want to do my prestige work in the cinema as well; and I think this feeling is growing. But the cinema has always been a kind of club . . . a special place where the people are very nice, all the films are very nice, and nobody does any real work.



"Othello" at Stratford: Albert Finney as Cassio and Zoe Caldwell as Bianca. Photograph by Antony Armstrong Jones.

URE: I don't believe the cinema has ever been taken really seriously in England, as it has been in America or in Europe. And of course this affects the acting profession itself. There are too many people who are only interested in making some kind of product which will sell.

MARCORELLES: Do you think films might be made more cheaply? Can you imagine, for instance, working on some sort of co-operative basis yourselves?

FINNEY: Yes, but it would be difficult. *Saturday Night* was quite a cheap film, for instance, but it still cost about £120,000. You can't make films as cheaply as they do in France. The unions come in here, though perhaps it might do them more good if they could relax their regulations now and again. Some remarkable films might get made which would give the whole cinema a boost, and would then give their own jobs a boost. But this seems part of a whole attitude towards the cinema . . . You know, you're going to do a little picture which will take four months, and perhaps you get £5,000 for that. Now that one's gone: well, I'll take a month's holiday, then I'll do another picture for four months. And that's got rid of another nine months of my life without any trouble.

URE: All the same, it's difficult to make good films cheaply: I think *Saturday Night* and *Sunday Morning* was made about as cheaply as any good film could be in this country.

MARCORELLES: What is your feeling about the star system? After all, some of the best actors in Hollywood are British, and some of them only became stars after they went to America.

FINNEY: I don't give a damn whether I'm a star or not. It's splendid to have money because then you needn't think about it, and that's a great advantage. But I just want to have a

"*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*": "... working a real lathe, with real metal, and working it myself."





"Othello": Mary Ure and Paul Robeson in Tony Richardson's Stratford production. Photograph by Antony Armstrong Jones.

go . . . to act, and to mean what I say, whether it's said jokingly or seriously. If I should incidentally become a star—well, all right, I'll be a star as well.

URE: There are very few real stars anyhow: you can almost count them on one hand. But it's very difficult for a young actor in this country to organise his career properly, and it's becoming even more so. When I was twenty-one I signed a film contract with Alexander Korda and he had complete script approval. Last year, in Hollywood, I was offered a film contract—one film a year, for an enormous amount of money—but it wouldn't have given me script approval. It makes it very difficult—what can you be put into?

MARCORELLES: Previously you seem to have had leading English stage actors who once in a while did a character part on the screen, and film actors who were prepared to become involved in the star-building machinery. Do you think there is a new attitude, that actors want a greater measure of responsibility?

URE: I don't think so. You may say that Albert feels more responsible, but you can't say this about all actors: you can't really generalise at all.

FINNEY: I don't think it has much to do with feeling responsible. But I am concerned to learn about acting in both mediums, while I'm not particularly aiming at becoming a star. For instance, although I don't yet know what my next film will be, I do know that I want the character I play to be someone very different from Arthur Seaton in *Saturday Night*. I don't want to cash in on what Arthur's done for me, whether audiences have hated him or loved him . . . I hate that kind of idolising of a performance because it seems to stand for certain things, so I want those people who are going to idolise me for the wrong reasons to get a surprise.

URE: But you're going to find it very difficult. The strange thing, when someone has a really great success in a role here, is the amount of time the public takes to come round. Unless the actor comes along with something completely different, and as soon as possible, they go on identifying him with that character.

FINNEY: I suppose, in a way, I could go on playing Arthur Seaton for ten years—I'd go mad!

MARCORELLES: What do you feel about the importance of a classical training, particularly in relation to your screen acting?

URE: It's important for an actor to have had a very varied background—classics, modern plays, verse, everything. All experience is a help in the cinema.

FINNEY: A classical training is terribly important. I was at Stratford for nine months in 1959, doing Shakespeare, and I was very uncomfortable, I found that for the first time I didn't really enjoy acting. But the whole way one responds to a Shakespearean text, to the costumes and the size and conception, is quite different from the way one responds to a modern or a Restoration play.

URE: I think it's very wrong to feel this . . .

FINNEY: No. I mean the demands that the text and the form of the theatre make on you . . . I know that in the middle of the Shakespeare season I wanted to do a modern play, something where I could put my hands in my pockets, maybe light a cigarette. When I've been doing a modern play for a while, I get the same feeling that I want to do a costume piece. Or a film, for that matter. So in order to fulfil myself at all I've got to be able to mix classical and modern work; I'd get bored doing just the one thing.

URE: Of course they all help each other. But, you know, the problem of Shakespearean acting in this country is enormous. The Zeffirelli production of *Romeo and Juliet* opened my eyes to Shakespeare, because for once I'd seen a Shakespearean production in which I could understand every word, every action, and in which this Italian director had managed to make English actors feel with their bodies as well as with their minds. There's this terrible tradition in England that Shakespeare is somehow different, that he demands a special attitude. For instance, in the *Romeo and Juliet* production people objected to the love scene taking place in the bedroom instead of on the balcony . . . This is ridiculous, you know! It has nothing to do with art.

FINNEY: It's hidebound; and that's why most Shakespeare productions one sees in England have twenty years of dust on them.

URE: One criticism of this production was the English attitude, "Oh, well, they're supposed to be Italian aristocrats." But this is just an English feeling about how an aristocrat should behave. What were Italian aristocrats like in the sixteenth century? We're still bound down by Victorian conventions in the theatre, and, because the two things influence each other, in the cinema as well.

MARCORELLES: Fundamentally, British acting strikes me as middle-class.

BOTH: Yes. Dreadfully!

MARCORELLES: What are your feelings about the actor's relationship with the audience? Do you find it a satisfactory one?

FINNEY: It's very different in the two mediums . . . But I'm fascinated by this question of the audience relationship in the theatre. There is so much theatre in which the audience simply sit down, quite comfortably on the whole, for two and a half hours, watch a play and then go home to bed. And about as much has happened to them as if they'd been sitting in Trafalgar Square watching the pigeons for the same time. There are some audiences who expect nothing to happen, and in fact wouldn't want it to happen. They're quite happy to sit there and watch figures walk about—nicely dressed, well-spoken, upstanding English gentlemen . . . One difference between the theatre and the cinema, I feel, is that in the theatre our job must be direct, instantaneous communication: the audience must feel that we want them to sit there, that we want to say this to them and we want to be sure they understand it. They've got to feel that it's all happening for them now, this minute, with a real sense of sharing.



URE: But the only way you can manage this is to be so caught up in what you're doing, so completely in control, that you can play with the people and make them realise it. You can't just go out and say "Now, look, share this with me!"

FINNEY: Of course not. It has to do with the amount of concentration one puts into it oneself. I feel this, for instance, about some Shakespearean soliloquies. These are usually done in one of two ways: either they're spoken directly to the audience, every line, or there's a fourth wall and the actor is thinking aloud on the stage. I believe the whole intention of the soliloquies is direct communication—but not *all the time*. Hamlet will begin by talking to his audience, for instance; then a new idea comes into his mind and he ought to stop, to play with his audience, almost to forget they are there, so that the audience starts to say "What's that . . . what's the matter with him?" He begins to develop his idea privately and then works it out with his audience, so that one can try to get them excited by the growth of the idea, can use them in this way. And the same with Iago. He ought to let the audience know all the time what he's up to, so that whenever he is on the stage they feel how clever he is . . . They really should want to shout out to Othello that this fellow is after him.

URE: Well, I don't feel this and perhaps this is the basic difference between us. Maybe I'm not really a theatre actress, because I don't have this feeling of wanting tremendously to communicate with an audience . . . The actor I'm working with is more important, and it's what I say to *him* and what I have to do with *him* that really counts as far as I'm concerned. In fact, I find that the most irritating thing in the theatre can be interruptions from the audience—somebody coughs, someone drops a tea-tray—which completely destroy the rhythm of a scene. And what I find marvellous about the cinema is that you get this intense concentration. All the technicians, everyone around, is interested, you have just those few minutes to bring the scene off, and everything is concentrated right down on to the minute.

FINNEY: Well, I feel in the theatre one's got to accept this. All right, tea-trays might drop, someone might cough, someone might have an epileptic fit. You have to accept the fact that they might; and that's the excitement.

MARCORELLES: You seem in any case, Albert, to be more interested in the theatre.

FINNEY: No, I was talking basically about the actor's communication with his audience in the theatre. His communication in the cinema is quite a different thing. There it's channelled through the director: the way the director looks at the actor is the way the audience is going to look at him.

URE: Well, I'm afraid that I like a wonderfully creative director and I like to play the scene to him . . . If you are going to be serious in the cinema, I think it's essential at the beginning that you should have classical training and theatre experience. But if tomorrow someone told me that I'd never work on the stage again, but that I was going to make fascinating, exciting films, each part different, then I'd say *that* is what I want to do. It would never happen, though, because this isn't something that happens in England.

MARCORELLES: There is still a practical problem—a question of contact with the audience. What do you imagine discussing with the audience? I don't mean just while you're acting.

FINNEY: Oh, no, that's not my job. My job is acting, and that is why I hate interviews or lectures, explaining myself to an audience. I feel very strongly that they should understand, or at least feel, what you are trying to do through your performances and that you shouldn't have to qualify it by public appearances.

URE: But think how many people *don't* understand, at least in the theatre. Every time I go to the theatre I almost dread it because I know there is going to be some sort of artificiality. It's not going to be as satisfying as an evening spent watching



Mary Ure, Richard Burton and Gary Raymond in the screen version of "Look Back in Anger".

even a bad film, because in the cinema I'd expect to feel much more involved, get a much greater sense of contact.

MARCORELLES: The problem seems to be, whether the actor ought to be simply a tool, or whether he should be more creative, not only through his own performances, but more generally in terms of society. Is he a kind of *monstre sacré*, or can he establish closer contact with ordinary people?

FINNEY: Well . . . I can only take an example. When I play Hamlet, for instance, my concern as far as the nobility of princes is involved is not to illustrate how noble I am. I want to forget all that. I'm Hamlet: don't you realise by the way I walk that I've been well brought up? But Shakespeare's audience, after all, was made up half of the nobility and half of the working classes; and I think the working class response to the play in Shakespeare's time must have been to recognise that a prince could go through something they could experience themselves. This is what is removed from the classics now: you get the feeling that Hamlet is going through an experience belonging to a special sort of man who was written about a few hundred years ago, who's very remote from life. I feel, you know, that acting ought to be very recognisable, that problems and feelings in a play like *Hamlet* ought to be transmittable to people of all classes. All right, so a working class person sees one's Hamlet. He accepts that he's a prince, but he doesn't feel about it "that couldn't happen to me—that could only happen to princes." And this seems to me the awful thing in the theatre now. And in the cinema.

It might happen in Britain, though, that folk acting, good regional acting, could develop a bit now. After all, the resources of this country have hardly been used in the cinema—either natural things like the Lake District or the industrial towns. What I'd like to do one day, for instance, is a real film about Robin Hood . . . you know, real outlaws living in the forest, with clothes they really wear, and sleep in, and get dirty. It's always being romanticised, all very nice and civilised and clean-shaven, and they've got the best tree trunks to sit on. And they could make a marvellous film, surely, about Cromwell, a period film with texture and quality to it.

(Continued on page 102)



# CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

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PENELOPE HOUSTON

SIX MONTHS AGO, WRITING about criticism in SIGHT AND SOUND, I quoted Lionel Trilling on "the dark and bloody crossroads where literature and politics meet," and his comment that "one does not go there gladly, but nowadays it is not exactly a matter of free choice whether one does or does not go." One way and another, and with however much determination in some areas to assert that it *is* a matter of free choice, and that the cinema in any case has not much to do with literature, it's around that inescapable crossroads, and around the much-abused words form and content, that most of the recent argument in film criticism has been going on. (See *Film, Definition, Film Quarterly, Oxford Opinion, Granta* for relevant texts.) Critical attitudes in the popular dailies naturally remain undisturbed, with a new critic celebrating her first week on the job by staying away from one film (she had heard it was long, Japanese and showing "somewhere in the Tottenham Court Road") and sending a friend to report on another for her. It's against a background of casualness—of which this, admittedly, is a captivatingly extreme example—that the seriousness, and occasional irascibility, of the little magazine debate stands out. Knuckles are being rapped all over the place; exhibitionist harangue has to be disentangled from useful truth. But at least there is an awareness that criticism is a discipline, although one which resists attempts to pin it down to a formula.

## *All the Conspirators*

ART FOR ART'S SAKE, WITH all its baggage train of associations—the artist's right to live somehow outside society, his divine irresponsibility and licensed temperament—has taken quite a beating in this century. The most the isolation-seeking artist might ask is to be left alone with his neuroses or his despair. But the ivory tower, like some battered, shrapnel-scarred ruin, has acquired the charm of nostalgia. Even if the artist no longer cares for its privileges, the critic may feel like claiming them on his behalf. The interconnections of art and society, the assumption of responsibility, are fundamental to the credo of commitment. But the sense of a work's social context (which need have nothing to do with the cliché of social significance) is too often assumed, and occasionally justifiably, to go with insensibility to its formal values. The critic, we are told, gets too easily on his high horse: he forgets that he and the artist are both inhabitants (or victims) of the same society.

The uncommitted school has done one useful job. They are, for better or worse, on the side of the artist. If they mistrust any comment which invokes moral or (in the widest sense)

political allegiances, they are also reminding us that artist and critic form a necessary alliance of sympathy. The risk, and there is one, has been neatly underlined in John Berger's introduction to his book *Permanent Red*. "If . . . you take a very limited view, it is possible to sympathise with almost all artists. If you accept what they themselves are trying to do, you can admire their effort. The work is then no longer proof of the validity of the artist's intentions; his intentions have to prove the validity of his work. . . . Accept that it is necessary for him to create a kind of tidal world of flux in which solidity, weight and identity are all sucked away, and then his paintings [or films] are certainly impressive." Regard art as a kind of conspiracy—"us" against "them"—and look for your reward in a sense of shared endeavour with the artist.

## *Questions of Form*

EXPERIENCED CRITICS ARE LIKELY to batten down the hatches when confronted with the intimidating words form and content (or, currently and mainly misleadingly, form *versus* content). They are storm signals; they are also unavoidable, and central to what criticism is about. So, briefly:

Content is not the subject or the story, but the subject plus the artist's attitude to it: his decision to develop it in terms of tragedy or comedy or melodrama, to emphasise certain values at the expense of others. To this extent, as a letter in our correspondence columns points out, form and content can hardly be disentangled. Decide to develop any given theme in a certain way, and you are already narrowing the range of formal possibilities open to you. And form is not just some convenient critical abstraction, but the end result of a whole series of acts of selection and rejection, deliberately or instinctively undertaken. Conceivably, though not probably, the artist might choose to approach form through content; but the critic can only define content through the given form. He can't effectively reverse the creative process, moving inwards towards a neat kernel labelled "content".

If the job of form is, simply, to define, contain and express content, the relationship itself is an infinitely fluctuating one. It can be effortless, assured, a perfectly held equilibrium. It can involve tension, the pressure to express all the meaning the artist wants to isolate in his subject. In Bresson's *A Man Escaped*, for instance, a balance is held: the means are so well fitted to the ends that every layer of significance in the film is floodlit with clarity. But most of the dissatisfaction felt about *Pickpocket* springs, I believe, from Bresson's assumption that his chosen form was a lot more expressive than it really is.



**FILMS FROM THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE**

The following films have been added to the Distribution Library during the last three months.

	Reels Sd./St.	Gauge mm.	Running Time
<b>ART AND HISTORY OF THE FILM</b>			
<b>Alone with the Monsters</b> (G.B., 1958. A film by Nazli-Nour, photographed by Walter Lassally. An avant-garde study of cruelty) ... ..	2 Sd.	16	20 mins.
<b>Crossroads of Life</b> (A United Nations Film) ... ..	3 Sd.	16	26 mins.
<b>Village Notary, The</b> (Canada, 1953. N.F.B.C. A satire on a Quebec village notary, narrated in rhyme) ... ..	1 Sd.	16	7 mins.
<b>FILMS ON THE ARTS</b>			
<b>And the Earth was without Void and Form</b> (An experimental film by Alina and Yoram Gross) ... ..	$\frac{1}{2}$ Sd.	16	3 mins.
<b>Form of Jazz, The</b> (Produced by the University of California. An exposition of the approach to jazz composition) ... ..	1 Sd.	16 Col.	7 mins.
<b>Short and Suite</b> (An abstract film by Norman MacLaren) ... ..	1 Sd.	16 Col.	6 mins.
<b>Tragic Pursuit of Perfection, The</b> (A Triangle Films and United Europe production, with commentary by Alan Badel. The life and work of Leonardo da Vinci) ... ..	3 Sd.	16	26 mins.
<b>We Shall Never Die</b> (An experimental film by Alina and Yoram Gross) ...	$\frac{1}{2}$ Sd.	16	3 mins.
<b>THE SCIENTIFIC LIBRARY</b>			
<b>Congenital Atresia of the Esophagus</b> (U.S.A., 1957. Produced by Richter, de Voar and Potts) ... ..	2 Sd.	16 Col.	23 mins.
<b>Congenital Malformations of the Heart, Part 1: Development of the Normal Heart</b> (U.S.A. Produced by Robt. F. Rushmer and R. G. Blandau)... ..	2 Sd.	16 Col.	15 mins.
<b>Embryology of the Liver, Gall-bladder and Pancreas</b> (U.S.A., 1952. Produced by Parke H. Simer) ... ..	2 Sd.	16	17 mins.
<b>Embryology and Pathology of the Intestinal Tract</b> (U.S.A., 1953. Produced by Graphic Films) ... ..	2 Sd.	16 Col.	14 mins.



	Reels Sd./St.	Gauge mm.	Running Time
<b>B.F.I. SPECIALISED LIBRARY</b>			
<b>TRANSPORT</b>			
<b>Operation Bluebell</b> (G.B., 1960. A record of some recent developments on the Bluebell Line in Sussex) ... ..	1 Sd.	16	7 mins.
<b>STUDY EXTRACTS</b>			
<b>General, The</b> (A) (Buster Keaton in pursuit of the stolen locomotive. Incidents include the firing of the railway-mounted cannon) ... ..	1 St.	16	11 mins. (24 f.p.s.)
<b>Navigator, The</b> (A) (Incidents include the picture at the port-hole and Keaton trying to launch a lifeboat) ... ..	1 St.	16	11 mins. (24 f.p.s.)
<b>8 MM LIBRARY</b>			
<b>Her Dramatic Debut</b> (With Mabel Normand, Fatty Arbuckle and Mack Sennett)	1 St.	8	12 mins.
<b>His Bitter Pill</b> (A Western with Mack Swain) ... ..	2 St.	8	25 mins.
<b>Clever Dummy, The</b> (With Ben Turpin) ... ..	2 St.	8	25 mins.
<i>Please note that the following films have been transferred from the C.B.A. to the Distribution Library</i>			
<b>Fisherman's Wedding</b> (Italy, 1947) ... ..	1 Sd.	35	12 mins.
<b>Rembrandt</b> (Germany, 1942) ... ..	10 Sd.	16/35	107 mins.
<i>Withdrawn from B.F.I. Distribution Library</i>			
<b>California Junior Symphony</b>			<b>John Sebastian</b>
<b>Gumbasia</b>			<b>Starling's Law of the Heart</b>
<b>Story of Light, The</b>			



# LECTURES

APRIL 1961

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Subjects</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Organisation</i>
4	9.30 a.m.	What Ought the Cinema to be Doing?	Paddy Whannel	London	National Association of Boys Clubs
5	4.30 p.m. & 8.30 p.m.	Analysis of <i>Come Back Africa</i>	Alan Lovell	Broadstairs	Kingsgate College (Nat. Council of Y.M.C.A.s)
5	7.00 p.m.	The National Film Archive	David Francis	Ipswich	Ipswich Film Society
7	2.00 p.m.	Telling a Story in Pictures	W. Charles Everett	Woolwich (Royal Artillery)	London Services Education Committee
7	7.30 p.m.	The Work of René Clair	Alan Lovell	Cambridge	Sawston Village College, Cambridge
8/9	Weekend	Japan and the Far East	John Huntley	Debden House, Loughton	East Ham Education Committee
11	8 p.m.	Trends in Contemporary Cinema	Stanley Reed	Aldersbrook Church Hall	Anglican Young People's Association
19	4.30 p.m. & 8.30 p.m.	Analysis of <i>Seven Samurai</i>	Alan Lovell	Broadstairs	Kingsgate College (Nat. Council of Y.M.C.A.s)
19	8.00 p.m.	The Cinema Industry	W. Charles Everett	Bromley	Bromley Branch Young Con- servatives (City of London Society)
24	6.00 p.m.	Film Music	John Huntley	Thames Ditton	Home Office Gramophone Society
27	6.00 p.m.	Mass Media— Threat or Opportunity?	Stanley Reed	Faringdon	Oxford University Institute of Education
28	7.00 p.m.	Making Films in Schools	Don Waters	London	Royal Photographic Society

MAY 1961

12/14	Weekend	Conference on "The Impact of the Mass Media of Communi- cation"	Paddy Whannel	Bromsgrove, Worcs.	Cadbury Brothers Works Council Office, Bournville
16	11 a.m.	Teachers and the Cinema	Paddy Whannel	Isleworth	Borough Road Training College

JUNE 1961

6	4.30 p.m. & 8.30 p.m.	Analysis of <i>My Darling Clementine</i>	Alan Lovell	Broadstairs	Kingsgate College (National Council of Y.M.C.A.s)
25	7.30 p.m.	Music of the Films	John Huntley	Dorking, Surrey	London Co-operative Society's Summer School



#### EASTER SCHOOL, April 5th-7th

At British Film Institute's Viewing Theatre, 4 Great Russell Street, W.C.1.

The School, designed for educationists, will deal with FILM ANALYSIS. The programme will include the screening of *Le Amiche*, *The Magnificent Ambersons* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. Speakers will be Stuart Hall, Dwight Macdonald, Stanley Reed, Clancy Sigal and Paddy Whannel.

The School is now fully enrolled.

#### JAZZ WEEK, 30th May-6th June

At the National Film Theatre. The Week will consist of three programmes covering the main developments in jazz since its early beginnings. The third programme will look at the spread of jazz in Europe and will premiere a new jazz film now in production.

Members' and Associates' tickets available from the National Film Theatre.

### SUMMER FILM SCHOOL 1961

The eighteenth annual residential Summer School will be held at Bede College, Durham, from August 5th-19th.

The course is a general one, covering the art and history of the film and the study of the cinema as an industry and popular entertainment. Students will also have an opportunity of taking part in the production of a short 16mm. film.

In addition to the resident staff lecturers, a number of guest lecturers from the film world will be invited to the school to address the students and join in informal discussion.

The inclusive fee for the fortnight, including tuition, full board, accommodation (in single study bedrooms, with hot and cold water) and gratuities, will be 22 guineas.

Brochure from: Summer School Secretary, 81 Dean Street, W.1. REG. 0061.

### THE BOOK LIBRARY

The following books have recently been added to the library (those marked with an asterisk are available for loan to members).

- \*ANDERSON, Clinton H.—Beverly Hills is my beat. London, W. H. Allen, 1960.
- ARISTARCO, Guido.—Storia delle teorie del film. Rome, Giulio Einaudi, 1960.
- ARISTARCO, Guido and CARANCINI, E. G. eds.—Rocco e i suoi fratelli. Bologna, Capelli, 1960.
- BATAILLE, Maurice Robert and VEILLOT, Claude.—Cameras sous le soleil. Algeria, Alger, 1956.
- \*BAZIN, André.—Qu'est ce que le cinéma? Vol. III. Cinéma et sociologie. Paris, Editions du Cerf, 1961.
- \*BERGMAN, Ingmar.—Four screenplays. London, Secker & Warburg, 1960.
- \*BILLQUIST, Fritiof.—Garbo. London, Arthur Barker, 1960.
- BORDE, Raymond and BOUISSY, André.—Le néo-réalisme italien. Lausanne,

- Cinémathèque suisse, 1960.
- \*BRUSENDORFF, Ove and HENNINGSEN, Poul.—Erotica for the millions. London, Rodney Books, 1960.
- CANTOR, Eddie.—The way I see it. London, Prentice Hall, 1959.
- CRO, Mario y Stelio.—El guion base del film. Mar del Plata, Editorial de Cultura moderna, 1960.
- \*FRANK, Gerold.—Zsa Zsa Gabor. London, Arthur Barker, 1961.
- LHERMINIER, Pierre.—L'art du cinéma. Paris, Editions Seghers, 1960.
- \*LO DUCA.—L'Erotisme au cinéma, Vol. II. Paris, Jean-Paul Pauvert, 1960.
- MITRY, Jean.—René Clair. Paris, Editions Universitaires, 1960.
- \*VERDONE, Mario.—L'attore nel cinema Britannico. Rome, Bianco e Nero, 1960.
- \*ZOLOTOW, Maurice.—Marilyn Monroe. London, W. H. Allen, 1961.





Marcello Mastroianni in Antonioni's "La Notte".

There is a great theme hovering in the background of *Pickpocket*, and through references to Bresson's other work, through our own willingness to make connections on his behalf, we can sense it readily enough. But it is not really there on the screen, and the failure is a breakdown of form.

The balance is really tipped, however, when one feels that form (strategy) and technique (tactics) are being used not to express but to muffle, to obscure the fact that nobody really has very much to say about the subject. If one contends, as perhaps one must, that too much content is preferable to too much style, to the indulgence of doodling with images or the exhibitionism of a display of temperamental tricks, then this remains the real sense in which one unrepentantly stands by content.

Some French critics have a passion for tracking down the intriguing ambiguity. An incident in a film is bad, but since its very badness can be taken as a clue to where the artist's real interests lie, then it becomes not merely defensible but necessary. This is hair-splitting at its finest, or the popular game of hunt the director. But criticism, inevitably subjective in terms of our own fallible responses, has to assume a certain objectivity in so far as the work itself is concerned. We have to suppose that an artist has chosen a subject because he wants to make some statement through it. We shouldn't, as John Berger has pointed out, have to dodge about looking for his intentions to prove the validity of his work.

Does film criticism demand some special set of ground rules? This is the feeling behind much of the current debate, the reasons naturally lying in the complexity of the medium. A large factor in film criticism is bound to be what is sometimes disparagingly called "literary"—concerned, that is, with values of character, construction, the art of narrative expression. These elements demand analysis and a consideration which is primarily intellectual. But the cinema's plus

quality, the thing which is its own, arouses first and foremost an emotional response. The sense of pleasure, excitement, exhilaration is a reaction to the way in which the thing is done: the exact communication, in a moment of screen time, of mood or place or relationship or tension. Easy enough to rationalise afterwards, to appreciate why a camera movement, a combination of image and sound, a juxtaposition of shots, has taken on the inevitability and necessity of an artistic statement. The problem is one of communication, conveying not a visual impression but the reasons behind a visual impression in terms which do not kill it stone dead on the page. A statement of how it is done (x constructs in depth; y likes shock images; z is a panoramic artist in CinemaScope) is clearly important; but it may still leave us just as far from *what* has been done—from communicating the precise quality of an experience.

Much of the current dissatisfaction with the state of film criticism originates, I think, around here. Film reviewing, at least as far as the press at large is concerned, has always been treated as the easiest job in the world. Now, on the magazine level, everyone is suddenly aware of the difficulty. But criticism, like art, essentially involves a process of selection; and any theory which presupposes that there are certain elements a critic *should* select is autocratically unrealistic. There have always been good and bad critics, rather than right and wrong methods.

Critical attitudes are liable to follow the way the cinema is moving at any given moment: if a lot of critics are concerned now with problems of definition, this may partly be a response to the present two-way pull in the creative cinema itself. On the one hand, there's the emphasis on shape, organisation, structure, values taken over from literature. Of course films like *Hiroshima mon Amour*, or *L'Avventura*, or *Pickpocket* are "literary," in the sense that their concern is not to





Improvisation: Jean-Paul Belmondo and Jean Seberg in a scene from "A Bout de Souffle".

communicate a sense of immediacy, the snatched impression, life going on, but deliberately to insulate a situation from "life" in order to identify it more exactly. "We live inside our novelists now," V. S. Pritchett wrote a few weeks ago in the *New Statesman*. "They offer us their consciousness." And it is certainly their "consciousness" that these films are offering. Simultaneously, however, comes the move towards improvisation, freedom from order, a conviction that the image will be more honest and revealing if it can be shot down, as it were, on the wing. Order is imposed originally through words, the discipline enforced by the desire to make a statement in a certain way. Films like *Shadows* or *A Bout de Souffle* try to sustain the illusion of being made up as they go along; and films like Jean Rouch's, if we can judge by reports, literally are made up as they go along.

Whichever way it goes, there is a strong, comprehensible and essential reaction against the kind of academic inanition which has crept up on so much popular film-making. Here, the play-safe policy, of buying up best-sellers and then encouraging films to lean on their scripts like crutches, has sent the form-content balance sliding. Content, in the sense of story, performance, locations, dialogues recorded with ping-pong automatism, has become almost everything. The unexceptional thing is said in the unexceptional way, until a comedy like *The Grass is Greener* creaks so nearly to a stop that one feels almost a shock of pleasure when something actually moves on the screen. The boredom of experiencing too many films of this kind (is the story reasonably holding; is the acting strong enough to see one through?) probably has nothing much to do with the creative artists' move either towards greater emphasis on formal values, or towards improvisatory methods which at least give the illusion of getting closer to life. It is, though, a factor of some relevance to the critical debate.

### Uncommitted Artist?

LEFT-WING CRITICS IN THIS country seem to have been thrown distinctly off-balance by Truffaut's *Tirez sur le Pianiste*. No one has had the nerve to write, though some people have said, that Truffaut may have to be written off as a serious filmmaker if this is the way he intends to carry on. Apparently the audience which saw the film at a meeting of the French Federation of Ciné Clubs towards the end of last year shared some of these reservations. At any rate, *Cinéma 61* in its January issue published Truffaut's detailed answers to the

questions asked him; answers which are revealing of the artist's position, and not irrelevant in relation to the critic's.

The basis of these critics' dissatisfaction is nothing more or less than a sense of let-down. *Les Quatre Cents Coups* was humanist, engaged, autobiography with a conscience. It was also a film which satisfied everyone, arousing instantaneous sympathy and liking. Yes, Truffaut says rather bitterly, "I started out to make a little film, something which the press would quietly encourage but which people wouldn't go to see. Then I saw this modest little family enterprise become a big international success . . . It belonged to the public which has no affection for the cinema, to the man who goes to the pictures once a year to see *Bridge on the River Kwai* or the new Clair film, the public I mistrust most in the world." And so: "This time I wanted to please only the real enthusiasts . . . and my only rule in making *Tirez sur le Pianiste* was my own pleasure . . . I would call the film a respectful pastiche of the Hollywood B-film, from which I have learnt such a lot."

"I know," Truffaut says, "that there is nothing the public dislikes more than abrupt changes of mood, but I have always loved them . . ." Practically speaking, the remarkable thing is that he was able to carry out this disregard for audience tastes, to make the film as he wanted. And what did he want to make? A record, almost, of a love affair with the cinema, a film full of jokes and allusions and tricks and charm. Godard's dedication of *A Bout de Souffle* "to Monogram Pictures" and Truffaut's avowed desire to do a pastiche of the B-picture are very personal variations on the French intellectuals' passionate attachment to a dream America. Truffaut has clearly haunted the cinema since his childhood. *Tirez sur le Pianiste* exists so much in the context of other films that you feel anyone who hasn't followed at least something of his own route to it could only be mystified.

To be pompous about a film like this, treating its director like a youth club leader who has been caught carrying a flick-knife, is merely trying to dragoon the artist into one's own camp. He has no intention of being pinned down, as his film makes sufficiently clear. His answer to the second question asked him—"why dodge the big issues of our time?"—is even more specific.

"You can," he says, "find my film useless, a misfire, a negation, anything you like. What I don't accept is your right to tell me that I ought to have been making something else instead . . . When a journalist asks me 'Why aren't young film-makers doing pictures about Algeria?', what I'd like to answer is 'Why don't you write a book about Algeria?' Because you wouldn't know just what to write? Well, then, I wouldn't know what to film!" He goes on to attack the Stanley Kramer type of problem picture, with its holier than thou self-righteousness, its lack of urgency or desperate conviction. "You can only," he says, "talk of the 'big problems' with devastating sincerity if they really keep you from sleeping at night." And consequently: "If, being what I am, I had tackled one of these 'big subjects' you want me to film, approaching it from the outside, I would have been dishonest since there would still have been in my heart a sleeping *Pianist* . . ."

One's sympathies are all on Truffaut's side. This is the way an artist functions; and for the critic to stand on the sidelines and try to shout the players down is not only futile but mannerless. Truffaut has chosen an obvious example to quote against his critics: films like Kramer's *The Defiant Ones* and *On the Beach*, so respectable, so genuinely well-meaning, so unassailably correct, are empty precisely because the sense of involvement at a personal level is missing. The element of



evasive smugness in the social conscience film has itself become a cliché, from Kazan's *Pinky*, which made it easy to sympathise with its Negro heroine because, after all, she was really Jeanne Crain, to Guy Green's *The Mark*, which appeals for a more tolerant attitude to sex criminals but won't take the risk of making its hero guilty of anything more substantial than an impulse.

All the same, Truffaut is really taking us down a false trail. No one expects the film-maker dutifully to sit down with a list of "big subjects" and tick them off one by one. What one could say is that his understandable retreat from the intimidating difficulty of the social subjects needn't lead him all the way to a private fantasy world of his own. We can't, again, presume to tell him that he ought to be concerned with some aspect of social reality; but we can ask why he isn't, what is the condition of the society he's living in which makes him so unwilling to come to grips with it. *Tirez sur le Pianiste* is almost a classic example of the kind of work John Berger means, I think, in the quotation I've used earlier in these notes. To enjoy it fully you must "accept what the artist himself is trying to do . . . that it is necessary for him to create a kind of tidal world of flux . . ."

It isn't very difficult to do this: to enjoy the mixture of character study, gangster fantasy, comedy and pathos; to take Truffaut's film precisely at his own evaluation of it and to recognise the honesty as well as the impudence which has gone into its making. It throws off sparks like a catherine-wheel, a fizzing, dazzling, short-lived divertissement. It comes not from an uncommitted artist, but from an artist who recognises in himself the necessity to be committed all the way. And



"A modest family enterprise . . .": "Les Quatre Cents Coups".

his emphasis on the difficulty (the emotional, rather than the economic problem) of this is something on which critics of the left might usefully comment.

## The Italian Triptych

IT ISN'T OFTEN THAT THREE films of the stature of *L'Avventura*, *Rocco and his Brothers* and *La Dolce Vita* turn up more or less simultaneously from a single industry. Antonioni, Visconti and Fellini are all artists who have left their apprenticeship behind them, whose control over their medium has become enviably assured and exact; and these very long, very serious films, taken together, add up to an extraordinary triptych. At a time when so much of the cinema's vitality is found in the work of its young artists, these films have all the unassailable solidity of mature achievement. Although they have all been reviewed individually in the last issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND*, taken together they still assert their relevance to the critical debate. What are the artists doing? And how have the critics responded?

*Rocco*, whose only English showing to date has been at last year's London Festival, has been praised from the left ("compared to this film all the other festival presentations seem insignificant" said one of *Definition's* editors, writing in *Film*), to left again ("Dostoevskian"—Penelope Gilliatt in *The Observer*), to right ("at first viewing, seems to dwarf anything else shown in the festival"—an *Oxford Opinion* contributor, also in *Film*). It has also been criticised by the left. "There is little real interest in the social theme . . . the Dostoevskian theme is no better handled," wrote Alan Lovell in the *New Statesman*. Most critics, though, have taken *Rocco's* social concern at its face value. *La Dolce Vita*, by the time it reached Britain, had already been an international talking point all summer. Critical reaction, almost inevitably, was divided between a slightly startled "is that all?" and a more or less complete surrender to the brilliance of Fellini's technique. The film has been enjoying a popular success which comes as a surprise to no one. *L'Avventura* has been found "monotonous" (Alan Lovell again); it bored Penelope Gilliatt so much that she added another hour to its length in her column. It split the left and the right, along not entirely predictable lines; and, with a long run at a very small cinema, it has become a *succès d'estime*. If *La Dolce Vita* is popular,

Respectful pastiche: death in the snow in "Tirez sur le Pianiste".



*L'Avventura* is fashionable—a much more dangerous and vulnerable condition, since every fashion invites a reaction.

None of these films, then, has swept the board, nor can one find any tidy groupings among the critics. *Definition's* editors, for instance, seem divided about *Rocco*; Derek Hill (*Tribune*) and Alan Lovell (*New Statesman*) disagree about *L'Avventura*; and, outside the published critics, two of the most talented and socially aware of our younger film-makers take opposing views on *La Dolce Vita*. The differences are sufficiently basic ones: either *L'Avventura* is one of the most boring experiences anyone has been asked to sit through, or it is close to a masterpiece; either *La Dolce Vita* is a film by a gossip columnist about a gossip columnist, or it is a deeply felt expression of despair; either *Rocco and his Brothers* is a piece of grand opera declamation or it is a work of Dostoevskian power and strong social concern.

It's scarcely surprising that controversial works should produce controversial reactions, since it is generally the trivialities on which the critics can be trusted to agree. But it may be worth noting that in two of the three cases (not, I think, in that of *La Dolce Vita*) critics are split not only on questions of success or failure, but more fundamentally on questions of artistic intention. A work of art exists; it is there; we look at it; and the more complex it is, the more our responses are likely to be conditioned by what we are putting into it ourselves, by pre-dispositions operating at a different level from conscious judgments. So, if one appreciates a *reductio ad absurdum*, there are really three things at issue: the film the artist intended to make; the film he actually made; and the film as a given critic sees it.

Look, for instance, at *Rocco*. It is the story of a family from the Italian South, struggling to establish themselves in the bleaker climate of Milan; of two brothers, Simone and Rocco, both boxers, both disastrously involved with the same girl. Because of Simone's surrender to corruption (to the girl, the boxing promoter, easy money and its hazards), Rocco must also sacrifice himself. Where the family in *La Terra Trema* was, simply, a family, the loyalties here are irrevocably shattered; and not only the loyalties, but the sense of relationship. We

don't feel that Rocco accepts the career forced on him because of family sympathies, but because, in the film's context, this is his destiny. And scenes such as Simone's murder of the girl—the arms raised in the pattern of a crucifix, the repeated stabbing blows—again suggest a ritual. The film is unable to convince us that these things are happening because the people and their circumstances are what they are: the director has willed them to happen, relying on his formidable stylistic equipment to convince us of the dramatic necessity.

One very minor incident may be revealing. The family wakes up one morning to find that it has snowed overnight. Snow itself is strange to the Southerners; more than that, it means the promise of work. There is a very human scene of bustle, excitement, motherly instructions to wrap up warmly. Then the sons go out into the cold morning—and the camera moves back, to a beautifully romantic image, dark figures against the snow. In its context, it's the wrong effect, because it imposes an artificial image, just as in the scene in which Rocco and the girl talk on the cathedral roof attention is continually being pulled away from the people to a setting which has nothing to do with them.

*Rocco* is not a film which makes connections. It builds up its several themes in layers and its power is not the force of unity but that of effect. *La Dolce Vita* is spread all over the place, the work of a film-maker with a marvellous eye, a reporter's flair for picking up details, and unrivalled talent for manoeuvring groups of people about the screen, whether they are waiting for a strip-tease or a miracle. But Fellini's qualities stop well short of self-criticism, so that everything goes on too long and everything is afforded almost equal meaning. Where Visconti convinces us that what really interests him is corruption, Fellini merely shows us people behaving badly. Even when he comes to one of his key episodes—Steiner's suicide—he still finds more dramatic value in the antics of the press photographers, the vulture chorus, than in letting us see for ourselves (instead of assuming) its crucial effect on Marcello.

Both these films are a good deal more obviously social than *L'Avventura*; they cover a wide range, whereas *L'Avventura* is concentrated in depth. Antonioni is an intellectual, which is traditionally something of a disadvantage in a film-maker, and a man of the left who has more to say about the rich than the poor, which makes him an oddity in any medium. And *L'Avventura* is not a film which can be admired in part, as one can react to isolated episodes in *Rocco* and *La Dolce Vita*. Its form and content are so nearly indivisible that it has to be accepted or rejected virtually as a whole.

This is one of the tests which a critic can apply; it at least points the difference between the work which has been thought out all the way, and one in which intention and achievement may be a mile apart. There are critics deeply suspicious of the well-ordered work: discipline, they argue, takes us away from life, and life is the proper business of the cinema. The film can come out into our world, touching it at as many points as possible, or it can invite us into its world, to experience its "consciousness". It seems to me important to recognise the difference and to note that this is one of those crucial areas in which our own tastes and pre-dispositions are likely to operate. But no more than that. I would much rather defend (if not precisely to the death) Mrs. Gilliat's right to be bored to tears by Antonioni than anyone's right to find one set of solutions to the artistic problem inherently superior to another.



The romantic image: "Rocco and his Brothers".



# NEW YORK LETTER

by CECILE STARR

THE APPOINTMENT OF Edward R. Murrow as director of the United States Information Agency is the promising start of what should become the revitalising of the American documentary film. Although at the time of writing no specific plans have been announced, Mr. Murrow said in his first press statement: "Whatever is done will have to stand on a rugged basis of truth"—and he added that in wartime reporters "told the truth even when it was not very flattering." Any film activities based upon such a statement would inevitably lead to new and exciting productions, showing the United States as it really is, which after all is not so very bad once we come out from behind the platitudinous disguises and the moralistic excuses.

The U.S. Information Agency, *The New York Times* political columnist James Reston wrote recently, has been "a spectacular disappointment from beginning to end," despite good leadership from previous directors, Elmer Davis to George Allen. The reasons stated by Reston: "The native suspicion and hostility toward all forms of propaganda, particularly on Capitol Hill; the penuriousness of Congress; and the mediocrity of the U.S.I.A. staff, among others."

The extent to which the native fear of propaganda can be dispelled will depend largely upon the wisdom of the Government's broader aims and policies, and upon the skill with which these are transcribed into the various information media. The penuriousness of Congress is a constant factor to be reckoned with. Under the new White House leadership, a stronger, more dynamic foreign policy may win stronger financial support for information services. It should not be forgotten, however, that it was an angry, retaliatory Congress which eliminated President Roosevelt's pre-war U.S. Film Service (which might ultimately have become the rough equivalent of Canada's enviable National Film Board), and which also withdrew the post-war funds which would have established an important national film centre within the Library of Congress (which might ultimately have become the rough equivalent of the British Film Institute).

If anyone can cope with the business of getting the Government's information machinery in working order, it should be Edward R. Murrow. "He has the poetry of the nation in his bones," wrote James Reston. "He has style and ideas, and if he can hold his temper on Capitol Hill, which won't be easy, he may prove to be one of the best of Kennedy's many excellent appointments." Giving up a \$200,000 income as the nation's leading radio-television commentator, and co-producer of the first—and for a long time the only—mature documentary TV-film series here, Mr. Murrow is in a stronger position than any of his predecessors to help create a truer voice and aspect of America abroad, and reawaken its critical self-respect at home.

The U.S.I.A.'s film efforts over the past eight or ten years have been limited by and large to facile reports on the visits of foreign potentates and records of our latest missiles and space machines. Its circulation abroad of non-government productions has involved only such films as show a consistently clean and defensible picture of America, eliminating any aspect of poverty, disease, social inequality, controversy or simple individuality.

In this connection, I had an experience with the U.S.I.A. a few years ago which is ironically pertinent today. At the instigation of one of its staff members, I was given a contract

to prepare, as an outside specialist, four two-hour programmes of 16mm. films to be presented by overseas U.S. information outlets to special groups which were complaining loudest of the lack of acceptable American short films—"cine clubs, cinematographic study groups and other societies, as well as special trade and technical groups and committees devoted to developing broader film usages and the improvement of film-making techniques, particularly in the non-entertainment field." Thus the contract stated. Naturally the selections were "subject to review and approval" by the Agency. So many films were vetoed among my first round of suggestions, and for such outlandish reasons, that it was evident the project would never fulfil its original intentions. In the end it took over a year to get the four programmes approved and written up; even so, I am not certain that the final programmes were ever assembled and sent abroad.

I was looking for outstanding examples of films made for specific uses: classroom teaching, sales promotion, health education and the like. In seeking the best use that TV had made of public affairs films, I was faced with one outstanding choice: Murrow's *See It Now* series. Word was given me that for the U.S.I.A. selections there could be no Murrow on civil rights, no Murrow on de-segregation, no Murrow on political issues. This was to be expected. What I had not expected was the final word: no Murrow. Could I find a TV public affairs film as well made as Murrow's, on as important a subject as his usually were—but not controversial and not Murrow? I could not, because at the time there were none.

Today the problem would be less difficult. Thanks in part to Mr. Murrow's perseverance, there is a number (though not nearly large enough) of television films which could be shown abroad as examples of how Americans think, disagree and learn. The Richard Leacock-Robert Drew films on the presidential primary and the New Orleans school crisis; the Al Wasserman-Irving Gitlin films on the Nashville sit-ins (shown recently on BBC television) and Hoffa's teamster union—these are films which enlightened people abroad would respond to as warmly as enlightened people here have done. They are films that stand on a rugged basis of truth, not always flattering truth at that.

If we have failed in our overseas film job, it should be noted that other countries have been failing here just as noticeably. The British and Canadians, who are responsible for almost everything good that has been accomplished with government information films, are not doing anything like the jobs they were doing here a decade ago. For lack of dollars, the British Information Services, for instance, has closed down its distribution of 16mm. and 35mm. films (these are handled by Contemporary Films and Lester Schoenfeld respectively), saving its efforts for the easy and cheaper television audiences. A new B.I.S. catalogue is coming out this spring—the first in five years—and despite a clever cover by Ronald Searle there is little indication that serious efforts are being made to put the films (some of Britain's best) to better use than they've had in the past. In contrast, the British films listed in Contemporary's complete catalogue have more accurate descriptions, full credits, and production dates. But no amount of promotion from a commercial distributor could be expected to equal what the British Government was able to do for itself with a full staff of film people.



# IN THE PICTURE

## Paris Notes

**L**OUIS MARCORELLES writes: The extravagant climate of the young French cinema, with its disregard for the hard realities of its time, its surrender to the impulse of the moment, and its defiance, it seems, of economic laws, continues to rule the day. Whether the films are made by directors now approaching their forties (Pierre Kast, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, Alexandre Astruc) or by Truffaut, Godard and the younger school, one can expect to meet the same actors and the same dream world of easy girls, lashings of money, fast sports cars. Jean Seberg, with her blend of American charm and Saint Germain des Prés temperament, is definitely the actress of the moment; Christian Marquand is a sort of French Joel McCrea. The American obsession is everywhere.

A new conformism seems the danger, now that we have moved abruptly (though naturally with style) from Zolaesque squalor to this shiny world of supermarkets and tape-recorders. Meanwhile sincerity becomes something to search for, while attitudes of defiance and sham daring camouflage a real fear of allowing oneself to be tricked or trapped, or of self-revelation. Out of all this allegiance to the smart and shiny can still come, however, a film as personal and as striking in its sensibility as François Moreuil's *La Récréation*. Moreuil was married until last September to Jean Seberg, who plays the lead in his first film, a freely rewritten version of a Françoise Sagan idea. The story concerns an American college girl, studying at Versailles, and her affair with a sculptor (Christian Marquand) living in the next house. He is flattered by her interest in him; she is scared of being caught in a sentimental trap. The affair ends harshly, with tears... Moreuil, who is only 24, gives an admirable description of Sagan's world; and there is real subtlety in the working out of an emotional relationship.

Where should one put the boundary line between "old" and "new wave"? Henri Colpi, 38 years old, editor of Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima mon Amour* and *L'Année Dernière*, author of books on the cinema and of a prize-winning radio script, has just won the Prix Delluc for 1961 with his first feature, *Une Aussi Longue Absence*. Marguerite Duras and Gérard Jarlot have provided the subject, in the best Duras tradition: the difficulties of communication between people, the theme of forgetfulness, attrition by time. Colpi's film is an admirable piece of psychological analysis, closer to Carné than to Godard in style but with a theme characteristic of the "new novel". The words are few, which is a change for a Duras script; actions are minutely analysed; the sense of time is omnipresent. Once one admits the initial convention and realises that these characters, like those in an Antonioni film, are going to live through a literary adventure, pre-determined on paper, one can only admire the mastery of the narrative and firmness of the construction. This is a conception of cinema in which editing pre-determines shooting—not the other way around as is the case with Truffaut, who likes to say that he "saves his films in the cutting-room". Both *Une Aussi Longue Absence* and *La Récréation* cost less than sixty million (old) francs and both were made entirely on location.

Alida Valli in "*Une Aussi Longue Absence*".

Clouds are massing, however, on the horizon of the rejuvenated French cinema. M. Terrenoire, de Gaulle's Minister of Information, has recently established a new and stricter system of censorship. Along with some judicious measures, such as the exclusion of children under 13 from sex and horror pictures, this puts certain real restrictions on creative freedom: pre-censorship of scripts; an absolute majority of state-selected representatives on the censorship commission; the total banning of certain films, political themes being most directly the target. M. Terrenoire suggests that the French industry should follow a system of self-censorship similar to the German method or Hollywood's Breen Code. But organisations of critics, actors and producers are reluctant to co-operate on such an arbitrary basis.

Meanwhile, the profession itself has been shaken by what is known as the "Truffaut-Aurel-Vadim affair". Truffaut began it with an angry article in *France-Observateur*, criticising Vadim's action in taking over from Jean Aurel early in the shooting of the new Brigitte Bardot film, *La Bride sur le Cou*. Vadim's answer claimed that Aurel agreed with what had been done; but Aurel, whose first feature this was to have been, corroborated Truffaut. The technicians' union, through its vice-president, the militant Communist Louis Daquin, backed Vadim with a statement that Aurel wasn't capable of making the film. The producer, Vladimir Roïtfeld, also supported Vadim, saying that his money was at stake and he had a right to do what seemed in his best interests. But twenty-seven directors—from Resnais, Truffaut, Malle and Godard to Cocteau, Delannoy and Duvivier—declared themselves solidly behind Aurel. Their statement: "We think that Roger Vadim's behaviour, in relation to Jean Aurel, has been the opposite of 'fraternal'. In effect, whatever is thought of the justifications which have been put forward, we hold (i) that a director of a film already shooting should not be taken off the production without his consent; and (ii) that no argument of *force majeure* should weigh against the consent of the superseded director."

One might perhaps add that, before Vadim's entry into the field, two young directors, Michel Boisrond and Claude Sautet, had been approached by the producer but refused to "supervise" Aurel's work against his wishes. And, finally, after their matrimonial problems, Brigitte Bardot and Roger Vadim seem very happy to be working together again. Anyone can draw his own conclusions on the rather special habits and customs sometimes operating in the industry.





## Filming "The Connection"

DOROTHY OSHLAG writes: A recent issue of *Variety* carried the headline "Legit Investors Eye Films". Implications of this, as evidenced by the current filming of *The Connection*, may mean that a way has finally been found to finance truly independent production which will be as free in its expression—and for basically the same reason—as legitimate theatre has been in the past.

Jack Gelber's *The Connection* opened at The Living Theater in late summer of 1959 and dismayed most New York critics. *The New York Times* called it "nothing but a farrago of dirt". But a later look by critics of influential weeklies, especially Donald Malcolm of *The New Yorker* and Henry Hewes of *The Saturday Review*, helped to rescue the play from oblivion. It is still a successful mainstay of the theatre's repertory, and a London production opened stormily a few weeks ago.

Shirley Clarke, whose short films include *Skyscraper*, *Bridges-Go-Round* and *Scarey Time*, saw the play and thought of it immediately as a film. She took an option on it and then came the age-old problem: how to finance a property which is concerned with a shocking and more or less taboo subject, drug addiction. The play's realism astonished those who have first-hand knowledge of the junkies' world and outraged those who haven't. Add to this a director new to the commercial scene, whose longest previous film had run twenty minutes, and the fact that she planned to use most of the original cast rather than any star names. Response from the usual sources—studios or distributors—was pre-ordained.

Nevertheless, as a result of a peculiar revolution now going on in the New York theatre, *The Connection*, directed by Shirley Clarke and co-produced by her with Lewis Allen, has been financed by the same kind of investors who have previously taken a chance on unknown playwrights and young directors. Because of concessions by the craft unions and Actors' Equity, which allow much lower minimum scale for off-Broadway theatres, a play like *The Connection* can be mounted for a relatively tiny budget. During the last five or six years, however, sky-rocketing costs on Broadway have forced individual investors to be replaced by complicated deals involving talent corporations, television networks and Hollywood screen rights. Not surprisingly, there has been a parallel decline in quality. (Louis Kronenberger, in *The New York Times*, says that "1955-56 is the last Broadway season that really was good.")

Out of all this has come a growing conviction by independent film-makers that theatre investors could be enticed into backing films. The cost of doing a Broadway show is now equal to that of a low-budget film, and a film has a much better chance of earning its money back. More than two hundred backers of *The Connection* have entered exactly the same kind of business arrangement used in the theatre: a limited partnership. Shares were purchased in exchange for which the investor could hope for a given percentage of any income returned to the partnership by the sale or lease of the film. He has had no voice whatsoever in artistic considerations relating to the production. If he is lucky, he will be invited to a preview screening; if not, he may even have to pay his own admission to the theatre where the film is playing. There was no distribution guarantee given. Investors were told only that the best possible distribution would be found for the film.

Miss Clarke underscored this in a recent conversation, when she said there were two things about this production which are of primary importance to her. "First, the artistic freedom allowed by this method of financing. Usually distributors prejudge an audience and often underestimate it. They need someone to tell them what's good. I'm not restricted by any pre-release commitments to a distributor. There's no one to say 'I'm afraid of the language' or 'let's rewrite that scene.'"

"And," she continued, "just as wonderful is having enough money to enjoy the personal freedom of working with a professional crew. I started in films the same way as many



"La Récréation": Jean Seberg and Christian Marquand.

film-makers, by doing everything myself. I was writer, director, cameraman, editor, sound engineer and lab messenger. I enjoyed it and learned a great deal about the craft. Yet having real pro's helping me was an amazingly happy experience and better still made it possible for me to concentrate on making the film. I don't go with the view of some independent directors that technical proficiency results in mere slickness. It's up to each film-maker how much control and knowledge he needs in order to be spontaneous. For me, spontaneity is an effect, not a method. I feel that the actors and the director are freer to improvise—that is, to create intuitively—when they are surrounded by order and not in the midst of chaos."

There are many new ideas being tried in *The Connection*. Although the subject of dope is not new to film, the beat realism of the junkies' world has undoubtedly never before been so truthfully explored. Jack Gelber's screenplay, on one level, is about a group of addicts waiting for their "connection" to appear with the day's ration of heroin. On another level, it is about the intrusion of a documentary film-maker who wants to record this world on film. His camera, in turn, provides a third level, which is the world created by the intrusion of the audience. The camera becomes the proxy for the audience, forcing it to watch, to respond, to take a point of view.

The entire action takes place in one room, the apartment or "pad" of a character called Leach. As often happens, a fortuitous accident had an influence on the shape of the production. The room was designed with a stairway leading into it so that the entire set had to be raised on stilts about five feet off the floor. Plotting of camera movements required that the set have four walls; so it became, literally, closed. This, together with Miss Clarke's decision to shoot the film in sequence, resulted in curious tension and excitement within the four walls. "It was like being in a tree-house," Shirley Clarke observed. "We felt absolutely remote from everything happening around us elsewhere in the studio."

When I visited the set about halfway through the twenty-day shooting schedule, the reality of the story had completely taken over. I felt immediately as though I had wandered into a world as alien to me as Leach's world is to Jim Dunn, the film-maker in the story.

Leach tells Dunn late in the film, "It's not really real." In



a sense here is the launching pad for Shirley Clarke's exploration of this particular inner space. We end by seeing a complete film-within-a-film. We see it while it is happening, not while an off-screen voice tells us it is happening. The sensation is unique and will surely point the way to new considerations of film and reality.

## Notes from West Germany

DEREK PROUSE writes: "Immediately after the war," says Helmut Käutner, "feelings were running high and there was enough idealism and enthusiasm to produce a few good films in Germany." (One recalls *The Murderers Are Amongst Us* and Staudte's *The Blum Affair*.) "But during the years of economic revival escapist entertainment was thought to be the only thing audiences cared to see. Now, with the achievement of surface prosperity and the Wirtschaftswunder, the public has once more begun to question; there's a genuine urge to examine, even question the nature of the so-called 'Miracle' of German recovery. The public is aware of the skeletons in the cupboard: today's main theme is 'die unbewaltigte Vergangenheit'—the unvanquished past which refuses to be ignored."

And in essence this seems to be true. *Wir Wunderkinder* and *Roses for the Prosecutor* were huge successes in Germany. At the moment the film to which the entire country is flocking is *Das Spukschloss am Spessart*. Made by Kurt Hoffmann (*Wir Wunderkinder*), its style recalls the pre-war Berlin cabaret spirit of political satire. Within the framework of a story about a haunted castle, present-day Germany is gleefully mocked. "There are ghosts in Bonn" is the title of one of the musical numbers, whilst another scene trounces the official pomposity attendant on a state visit by a foreign tycoon. In the Bonn courtroom a judge belligerently calls for order, bangs too hard on his bench causing the plaster cast above his head to crack revealing the emblem of the swastika, only too insecurely walled up. "*Die unbewaltigte Vergangenheit*" is all around one.

Käutner's new film is called *Schwarze Kies* (*Black Gravel*), though he hopes for foreign distribution to revert to his original title, *The Accident*, which the distributors refused him in Germany. His story is set in a German village which becomes a boom town, with prostitutes and black marketeers plying the liveliest trade, when the Americans take it over for a military base. (Yet another theme which would have stood no chance of acceptance three years ago.)



Käutner has been filming his story on location and recorded much actual conversation which regrettably turned out to be far too lewd for any screen purposes.

One of the most ambitious and costly productions is Bernhard Wicki's *Die Wunder des Malachias*. Based on a Scottish fantasy written in 1928 by Bruce Marshall, it has been rewritten to reflect the mood of today. When the film opens, a depraved night-club situated next to a church has disappeared overnight, with its entire clientele, to reappear on a distant island. This is naturally interpreted as a miracle, the result of intercessions by a priest, Malachias. But the consequences are disastrous: the place rapidly becomes a 'miracle site' to be ruthlessly exploited for its sensation value. Quacks peddle miracle water; clip-joints and strip-joints spring up to cater for the sightseers; the squalor of the original night-club is soon surpassed. There remains one possibility: further intercession in the hope of a second miracle. When this occurs, the surprised inhabitants wake up to find the original night-club back in its old home.

Wicki does not deny that this is an ironic, even pessimistic view of modern values. Once again, as in *The Bridge*, he is filming entirely on location. Much of his film has been shot at Gelsenkirchen in the heart of the Ruhr, whilst a smart party which shows high society modishly taking up the miracle as its latest diversion is shot in a roof garden against a complex network of the girders and cranes of Hamburg's docks. Wicki works slowly and conscientiously; a shambling, stolid-seeming Swiss who appears shy and introverted but who can become galvanised into feverish creative energy. Since making *The Bridge* he has been acting in Antonioni's *La Notte*—an experience which he found deeply engrossing.

## Buñuel in Spain

FRANCISCO ARANDA writes: Luis Buñuel is back in Spain, and in February he began work on a new subject. "It is going to be the film which gives me most freedom since *L'Age d'Or*," he says; and in fact the original script is entirely his. It tells a story of a group of beggars and a nun who has fled from her convent. The leading actor is Francisco Rabal, who played in *Nazarin*, and the camerawork is by Aguayo. The title is *Vinidiana*, the name of a fifteenth-century Spanish saint, though the story has been transferred to the present.

Although Buñuel has worked before in his native country, for almost thirty years this essentially Spanish artist has been considered a French or Mexican director. During 1935–36 he produced and supervised four modest comedies here, and *Land Without Bread* was, of course, a Spanish documentary. Now *Vinidiana* is going to be an authentic Spanish drama by Spain's major screen craftsman.

The event is significant from every point of view. Buñuel is not working for large-scale commercial producers but for a group of relative youngsters. His production company is Portabella, responsible last year for Saura's *Los Golfos* and Ferreri's *The Wheelchair*, in association with Uninci, the firm which launched Bardem and Berlanga in 1953, and with them the modern Spanish cinema. It is a happy amalgamation. The rebel generation has brought Spain into the foreground of European production—Buñuel had to join them!

Bardem's *At Five O'Clock Sharp* has been shown here and at the Mar del Plata festival. Less ambitious than his last two failures, and less directly in the line of Spanish ideological cross-fire, it is a much more finished picture, a return to form. Berlanga is working on a characteristic light comedy, *Sit a Poor Man at Your Table*. This is the slogan proposed by charitable organisations, asking families to invite the poor to share their Christmas dinners; and the comedy begins when we find out that there are no poor people available, since they are all too busy with the more profitable business of begging after the midnight Christmas mass. Other projects are coming from Portabella, the most ambitious being perhaps an adaptation of Kafka's *The Castle*, to be directed and co-produced by Marco Ferreri.

## Film Study at London University

FACED WITH THE PROBLEM of introducing a Study of the Film as an extra course at University College, London, Thorold Dickinson has decided to operate, for a start, on two planes. He is not concerned with the point of view of the outsider criticising the film as a detached observer but rather with the potential film-maker examining cinema from within. To the film-maker every film is a separate new

Site of the miracle in Bernhard Wicki's "*Die Wunder des Malachias*".



adventure and a personal experiment; and the true film is the sharing of an experience between maker and audience.

To initiate the students he is, on Mondays, demonstrating the editorial process which developed the film from a record into a means of creative expression, while on Tuesdays he shows them recent films which are complete and individual demonstrations of the art of cinema. On Wednesdays the group meets round a viewing machine for discussion and analysis of the subjects studied on the previous days. The Study is open and free to members of University College, and others can participate by enrolling as part-time students, paying the usual small fee involved.

The resources for the Study are steadily expanding. The Physics Theatre, already supplied with 35mm. and 16mm. projectors, will be equipped also with wide screen and CinemaScope during the Easter vacation. And it is hoped, beginning in the summer of this year, to house co-operatively in the College a small academic film unit which, while itself making educational films, will give opportunities to some of the more active students to dabble and experiment in the practical way of producing. These activities supplement without interfering with the University College Film Society's flourishing programme of film exhibition and production.

To encourage close study of the film, two post-graduate research studentships are awarded annually, each carrying a grant of £600. Applicants wishing to be considered for these grants should apply before May 1st, 1961, in writing to the Secretary of the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London, Gower Street, W.C.1.

The project is financed by three bodies which generously responded to approaches by the British Film Institute: the British Film Producers Association, the J. Arthur Rank Group Charity and the Associated British Picture Corporation.

### Work in Progress

#### Great Britain

BRYAN FORBES: *Whistle Down the Wind*, adapted from Mary Hayley Bell's novel by Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall. Hayley Mills plays a small girl on a remote Yorkshire farm who believes that her

meeting with a stranger has in fact been an encounter with Jesus. A Beaver production, for Rank.

TONY RICHARDSON: *A Taste of Honey*, from Shelagh Delaney's play, with Rita Tushingham, Dora Bryan and Murray Melvin; camera-work by Walter Lassally. A Woodfall production, for British Lion.

#### United States

JOHN CASSAVETES: *Dreams for Sale* (a change of title from the original *Too Late Blues*), a story about a group of jazz musicians. Singer Bobby Darin plays their leader; Stella Stevens is the girl he loves but finally lets down. For Paramount.

GEORGE CUKOR: *Lady L.*, from the novel by Romain Gary, with Gina Lollobrigida and Tony Curtis. A Julian Blaustein production, for M-G-M.

PETER GLENVILLE: yet another addition to the Tennessee Williams canon, *Summer and Smoke*, with Laurence Harvey and Geraldine Page. Hal Wallis, for Paramount.

STANLEY KRAMER: *Judgement at Nuremberg*, a fictional story with action centred on the Nuremberg Trials. Spencer Tracy, Burt Lancaster, Montgomery Clift, Judy Garland, Marlene Dietrich are all in the cast. Kramer, for United Artists.

### Self-Examination in Korea

THE DOMESTIC FILM PRODUCTION of Korea has been developed remarkably and 85 pictures were produced during last year. And it was the most difficult problem for producers to select casts because of the top stars insufficiency. In this connection, one of the top line stars was starred in 16 pictures at the same time.

The other way, unexpectedly many directors were appeared, for 52 directors were connected with producing these 85 pictures. During last year, of these 52 directors, three ones directed each four pictures, seven ones each three pictures, ten ones each two pictures and the other thirty-two ones directed each one picture.

It is a question how many of these 52 directors will be active again this year. But for the improvement of pictures in quality, their self-examination is earnestly demanded.

—Press bulletin from the Far East Press.

Clark Gable and Marilyn Monroe in John Huston's "The Misfits".







# TWO ON THE SET

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE ROMAN SPRING  
OF MRS. STONE, BY THOMAS PICTON

FROM THE WIDE ITALIAN street where we stand one can catch a glimpse of a biscuit-coloured baroque church up a flight of steps, or study the mouldering upper storeys and spruce ground floors of several expensive shops, or drift through the rustling chain curtains into a small, intimate café on the right, a large and well-appointed men's hairdresser on the left, just a door or two down from the Elizabeth Arden beauty salon. Sotto il sole di Roma? Well, not exactly, but as near as the designs of Roger Furse and the efforts of the studio builders and decorators at A.B.P.C. Elstree can make it, for this is the major set for the film version of *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*.

One could imagine more probable places for such a subject to be made—Rome itself, for instance, which would have been its location if political difficulties had not arisen—especially on the day I visited the set, when the road approach to the studios, once free of Edgware, was a succession of misty vistas across waterlogged fields and through dripping, Tennysonian woods. Even inside the studios a hint of January hung about; far from being under a Roman sun, the street was not even under the arc-lights of Elstree, being illuminated at that stage only by the subdued lighting normal while the carpenters and electricians put the finishing touches to their work. "We'll be in here tomorrow, all being well," said my guide cheerfully as we picked our way round the café tables and peered at the jars and bottles in the hairdressers, just to make sure that they were actually Italian varieties of the well-known brands. "Will I be glad to get out into the street, after being cooped up in that damned flat for six weeks."

The flat in question was our destination, the apartment occupied by Mrs. Stone, a faded American actress, during her protracted stay in Rome and slightly less protracted affair with the young Italian gigolo she meets there. Across a shaky and already half-dismantled patio commanding a view of tiled roofs and one or two familiar Roman landmarks in miniature on the skyline, through a drawing room and leaving aside two or three other rooms in this elaborate composite set, we circled round to what would be, when replaced, the fourth wall of Mrs. Stone's bedroom. At the moment it was missing, and instead a camera on a dolly and the usual gaggle of technicians almost blocked our view of the scene in progress. In the centre Mrs. Stone herself—Vivien Leigh, in lilac chiffon (costumes by Balmain)—was walking to a small table, turning slightly to listen to frantic banging on the door, then continuing across the room to end sitting in a chair by the window. "She's just quarrelled with her lover at a party, and now he's banging at the door asking to be let in," proffered someone helpfully. There was some slight complication—the table was too low for her to reach the ash-tray on it conveniently without going out of camera range, or something of the sort—and a swarthy, dark-haired man, wearing a fawn wool sports shirt and cinnamon corduroys, stepped forward to consider the matter.

This was Jose Quintero, New York stage director, and now for the first time following the trail blazed by Kazan into the cinema. Talking to Lotte Lenya, who plays the old and vicious Contessa in *Mrs. Stone*, a few days before, I had heard a lot about him: his quietness and complete confidence; his ability to extract what he wanted from an actor without seeming to direct at all. Now he spoke so quietly that even at about five paces what he said was inaudible, but the difficulty was instantly resolved and shooting began. Once through; a slight modification, and another take; a word to Vivien Leigh and then the whole scene taken again a tiny bit quicker, with a slightly more pronounced slam of the door to begin with, and the director was satisfied. "When we began shooting you could see his stage background coming out occasionally; he would shoot from one position and devise cross-movements, like on a stage, to sustain interest, but since then he's become freer and freer in his use of the camera," whispered my guide as the

Street scene: exterior set at Elstree  
for "*The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*".



camera executed a smooth turn across the floor and came to a halt framing Miss Leigh neatly in her high-backed chair.

The time had come for some lengthy rearrangement of the lights, so I was able to snatch a few moments with Mr. Quintero. I remarked on his speed and assurance, quite remarkable for a director making his first film. Had he really never been behind a camera before? No, even when directing for television he had had a camera director and been responsible himself only for what the actors did in front of the cameras. Did he find directing actors for the film very different from directing them on the stage? "No, except for the obvious differences of scale: the flick of an eyelash on film can tell you as much as a gesture which takes a whole arm on the stage. But then I try to rehearse the film rather as one would a stage play. I'm shooting as far as possible in sequence, and I like to take the scenes as a whole first before doing action and reaction shots, close-ups and so on, so that the players know exactly how whatever they are doing at the moment is related to the whole performance."

Was it true that, compared with many directors, he gave his actors very few direct instructions? "Well, you know, it's all a matter of how you communicate with them. If, for instance, I suggest to Vivien that she make a certain shoulder movement at a certain time, she understands at once that this is a gesture of rejection, and what climate of feeling, what precise attitude to her partner in the scene, is implied by it. I don't have to spell it out or discuss it. With another actor I might start at the other end; explain what I thought his emotional situation in a scene was, and then let him find the gesture to embody it. Everything depends on the individual."

Disclaiming any intention of placing him in a glass-house and inviting him to throw stones, I wondered nevertheless

which of the previous film versions of Tennessee Williams plays he had seen and what he thought might be different about his own approach. He considered for a moment: "I've never really thought about any overall approach, and certainly not about making mine different from anyone else's; I've just tried to approach the material freshly, on its own merits. I think what appeals to me primarily about Williams is the lyrical quality of his writing, and I suppose I would tend to give greater emphasis to that, whereas another director might concentrate rather on the violence . . ."

With this view of Williams's work, at least, Miss Leigh heartily agreed. Her admiration, she confided, was unlimited for the more subdued, poetic works—*Streetcar*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Summer and Smoke*—and *Camino Real* was possibly her favourite among all his plays. I suggested that *Mrs. Stone*, adapted by Gavin Lambert from Williams's novel of 1937 with the aid of the master, should meet with her approval, as in many ways the most atmospheric and lyrical of all his works, and offering in addition a central role not altogether dissimilar from Blanche DuBois. She turned a chilly eye on me. "Do you really think there is any resemblance?" Cowed, I muttered something about "two lonely women seeking refuge ineffectually from a hostile world in the arms of unsuitable but determinedly idealised men." "Possibly, but that's all there is to it; otherwise they're completely different."

At this moment, perhaps fortunately, they are ready for the next scene, and back we all troop to Mrs. Stone's bedroom. This time Miss Leigh and Warren Beatty (as Paolo, Mrs. Stone's young lover) have to come in, he apparently in a flaming temper, and then they react, in separate shots, to an off-set comment by the Contessa about the chicken-hawk, an American bird of prey which feeds entirely on the youngest

Warren Beatty and Vivien Leigh.







Jose Quintero on the set of "The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone".

and tastiest roosters. There are two rehearsals. During the second, Warren Beatty strides across the set in such an exaggeratedly rangy fashion that Miss Leigh begins to giggle, one technician asks him if he has seen any Marx Brothers films lately, and Miss Joan Collins, his fiancée and a patient spectator, remarks, not altogether seriously, that he looks like a panther. The next time he walks with more restraint, and the shot is taken that way. Now it is his turn to react, with the camera looking over his shoulder into a mirror as he runs a comb through his hair. At first he is meant to be sitting in front of the dressing-table to do so, but he objects. "Do I have to sit here? Don't you think it looks, well, kinda . . ." Jose Quintero thinks perhaps it does look a little kinda . . . and he is allowed instead to adopt a more tough and virile stance, leaning over to see his reflection with slightly less appearance of being at home in front of a loaded dressing-table.

That over, he is free to talk, while Mrs. Stone's reactions are recorded in her mirror at the other side of the room. He professes himself happy with his part, since it takes him right away from the sort of clear-eyed, all-American boy from the midwest which, "looking clean-cut, agreeable and healthy," he felt he might get stuck with. How about accent troubles? Did he find the Italian accent, for which he was being specially coached by a native, at all inhibiting to his performance? No, on the whole he thought it was an advantage, making it easier to step out of his own character and into the other role. I quoted to him Annie Girardot's remark that she found playing a role which involved assuming a dialect or foreign accent impossible, as she could not enter properly into such a part or identify herself with the character. He shook his head in bewilderment. "She must be crazy. I suppose she's just talking

about the sheer technical difficulties; she's frightened of committing herself on such a matter of actor's technique. But I've never found that part of acting difficult myself anyway. I may not do it well, I don't know, but I've never found it difficult; and in fact whatever I do, whether it's good or bad, it always comes easy to me . . ."

\* \* \*

Another young man who has been finding things come easy to him in the last year or so is Arnold Wesker; but even he, one would imagine, must have found some difficulty in persuading a film company to agree to his terms for the filming of his plays, which amounted to more or less complete control over the resultant production. A.C.T. Films, however, finally reached an agreement where larger and more influential companies had failed (notably, it is rumoured, over *Roots*) and went into production at Shepperton in January with *The Kitchen*. Now though *The Kitchen* is not exactly lacking in action (illicit love among the ladles, a knife fight, a scalding, a miscarriage and a climactic smash-up are only a few of the incidents featured), it would hardly seem at first glance an indubitably box-office subject, especially filmed with a largely unknown cast. And yet the National Film Finance Corporation have taken the unusual step of putting up almost the entire cost of the film (an estimated £40,000 to £50,000) themselves. Naturally one of the first things I asked the producer, Sidney Cole, when I looked in on the last day of four weeks' shooting, was how he managed to persuade them.

Mr. Cole seemed worried that I was worried. "After all," he said firmly, "it isn't true to say that there aren't any stars.



Carl Mohner (who plays the central character, a German cook) is a big star on the Continent. And most of the others have been heard of . . ." But, I pressed gently, it was not really what you would call a cast of first-feature British stars? Mr. Cole looked hurt. "Well, admittedly it doesn't have a Mills or an Attenborough, but it wouldn't be fair to say that it had no stars . . ." I tried a different line. At least he would agree, I asked, that it was an unusual venture in the contemporary British cinema, and presumably the Finance Corporation's encouragement was as much a tribute to the film's potential, well, "cultural value" as anything else? Mr. Cole winced. "Well, I wouldn't put it like that; any suggestion that a film has cultural value is the kiss of death in this business. Let's say that we see this as a strong story with great entertainment value and a big potential popularity among a wide variety of filmgoers . . ."

While this slightly elusive interchange was going on, filming was proceeding at a positively breakneck speed all round us in the smallish café kitchen set where the whole action, save one or two establishing shots, takes place. (It looked about the size of the kitchen Mrs. Stone's apartment would have, if fitted out with anything so mundane.) The director responsible for this spanking pace—the unit had been putting away an average of five minutes every day—is James Hill, a new graduate to features via documentary (*The New Explorers*, *Giuseppina*) and children's films (*The Stolen Plans*, *Peril for the Guy*). On this last afternoon of shooting he was rushing to and fro, a small, slight, prematurely grey figure, setting up and shooting isolated shots of violent reaction. A cook glared into the camera, horror-stricken. "I'll turn off the main," he cried wildly and dashed out of frame. This disposed of, he was called on to simulate yet greater anguish, while steam shot at him from all sides and waitresses bustled grimly backwards and forwards behind him.

All this time an even shorter (I think) and certainly slighter figure than the director shadowed him, Nuclear Disarmament badge prominently displayed on a green sweater. This was the author, Arnold Wesker, who spent almost all his time on set watching every detail of the shooting. He had adapted the play, in collaboration with Sidney Cole, supplied all the additional dialogue required, and was consulted at every stage of the production. He is eagerly interested in film-making; and although relations on this particular production seemed remarkably amicable ("Arnold, James and myself take all the decisions in concert," said Mr. Cole, "and we haven't had to call in an arbitrator yet"), there is little doubt, from the hungry way his eyes follow the technicians about, that Mr. Wesker will not be content with just script-writing any longer than he can help.

I retailed to him the rumour that he was going to take over the direction of *Cleopatra* and rewrite the script in



Sidney Cole and Arnold Wesker.

collaboration with Lawrence Durrell. He laughed: "That's the sort of rumour I like to hear. Anything which would make Spyros K. Skouras say 'Who is this Arnold Wesker anyway?' is all right by me." In the present film, how much had been altered from the play? "Oh, it's completely different from the play." Mr. Cole hit him. "Well, it's about 95 per cent. the same; just a few minor technical alterations."

As he scurried away for a quick session on his typewriter, I pursued this question of the relationship between play and film further with Mr. Hill and Mr. Cole. They both agreed that an essential ingredient of the play, the feeling of claustrophobia and isolation which wears down the characters, would be lost if the action was spread out beyond the confines of the kitchen itself. With this in mind, Sidney Cole had decided to adapt as little as possible, and James Hill had chosen to shoot the script with an unusually high proportion of large close-ups, moving in on the play, boring into its characters or moving freely among them to involve the audience as far as possible in their humdrum, if on the climactic day when the action takes place, quite eventful, lives.

I left as a dolly shot involving the camera in an eager pursuit of Carl Mohner, as he rushed across the kitchen bent on savaging a stand of miscellaneous glassware, was briskly wrapped up ("He actually smashed the glasses yesterday; pity you weren't here"); and Mr. Hill began to put the heroine (an exceptionally attractive new acquisition from the stage called Mary Yeomans) through her third separate emotional crisis in close-up that day. Of course I was right; there aren't any stars in it—yet. But who knows, perhaps Mr. Cole is right too, if a little premature. By this time next year, maybe the Millses and Attenboroughs will have been definitively joined by Tom Bell, Brian Phelan, Sean Lynch, Scott Finch; just as the Brandos, Curtises and Perkinses will almost certainly have been joined by Warren Beatty. Perhaps Jose Quintero and James Hill will both be well on their way to the top of the directorial tree. It will certainly be interesting finding out.



A scene from "The Kitchen" in rehearsal.





# SATYAJIT RAY AND





May 6th is the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Rabindranath Tagore, great Bengali poet, story-teller, Nobel Prize winner. The celebrations will include, appropriately, two new films by Satyajit Ray: a full-length documentary study of Tagore and a feature, *The Three Daughters*, bringing together three of his stories.

Both films, it is hoped, will be shown in London during

May at the National Film Theatre. Previously Ray had completed another feature, *Devi*, which may be less widely seen outside its own country. The story has to do with the survival of superstition, and it's suggested the subject may seem alien to Western audiences; or, from an official viewpoint, misleading in its view of Indian life.



# THE TAGORE CENTENARY

LEFT: Satyajit Ray (kneeling, right) instructs one of his players while filming on location.

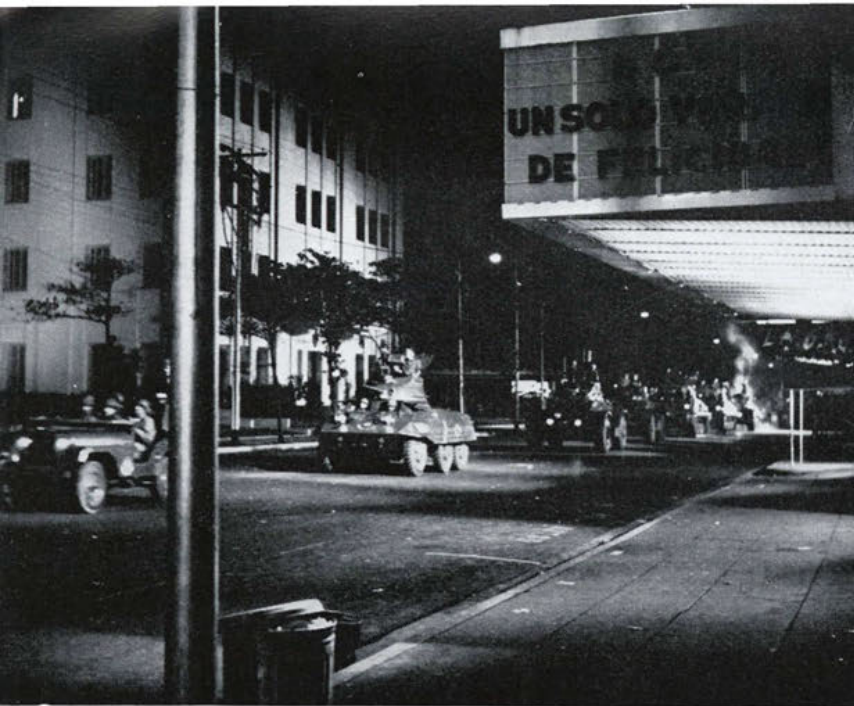
LEFT, BELOW: Sharmila Tagore, who plays the heroine in *Devi* (*The Goddess*).

ABOVE: Another scene from *Devi*, with Sharmila Tagore and Soumitra Chattarjee.

BELOW: *The Postmaster*, one of the three Tagore stories which make up *The Three Daughters*.







# THE CUBAN ENTERPRISE

PETER BROOK



TO TELL THE STORY PROPERLY, I must go back a bit. A few weeks before leaving for Cuba I was in the office of Jorge Barbachano, one of the biggest film producers in Mexico and the one who has been most connected with distinguished and artistically worthwhile productions. He was talking about the difficulties of the Spanish-speaking market—how in the whole continent there were truly only handfuls of people interested in good films: suddenly he took a vast ledger from a shelf and put it in front of me. “You might like to take a look at this. These are our accounts for Latin America.” I turned over the great pages with long copperplated columns of to me meaningless figures, until I came upon a part I could understand—figures so absurdly unbelievable that what they said was crystal clear. They were the producer’s share of the takings of *Torero*, *Raices*, Bardem’s *Sonatas* and Buñuel’s *Nazarin* in the various countries; and the sums—for areas as vast as Brazil—were in the region of a hundred dollars. Peru, 72 dollars . . . Uruguay, 115 . . . Ecuador, 91—one saw that it was perfectly possible for a film, glittering with international prizes from all the film festivals and hailed by the local press, to recover not more than a few hundred dollars after complete distribution over the whole continent.

This is apparently typical of the fate of the Spanish-speaking art film. As a result, Barbachano now writes off the Spanish market completely and has himself turned his sights on to that dangerous hybrid, the international picture spoken in transatlantic English. Other producers have settled for the fact that while there is not even the beginnings of a serious Latin film audience, there is a goldmine of a crowd for any form of rubbish in which cowboys strum guitars and sing songs under ten gallon sombreros. So Mexico produces about seventy films a year, but the Mexican art film is a thing of the past. Mexican state capitalism has the worst features of state ownership with the worst features of private finance: the state bank and the state distribution create an impenetrably closed circuit which makes a *nouvelle vague* technically impossible. Even with independent financing (which I think is now a legal impossibility), there are no independent channels through which the picture could eventually be shown.

This is the background of the pre-Castro cinema. It was not that the rotten Batista system actually kept the Cuban film industry down: on the contrary, it was simply that in the logic of a continent where film-making is completely tied to the box-office, a Cuban attempt to produce Spanish-speaking movies would have made no sense. Mexico (a far larger country) and the Argentine were catering admirably for the existing needs. In fact, in the way that economic laws operate with beautiful simplicity, Cuba had become the active centre of something that seemed indigenous to her—the making of pornography. I’m told that just before the revolution the blue film had reached technical heights and in Havana they were using CinemaScope and colour. (Today, when one assesses the miracle of a film industry which has sprung up from nowhere in two years, one mustn’t forget this nucleus of experienced technicians; after all, what they’d learnt still applies—here technique can perfectly be divorced from content—a tracking shot is a tracking shot, focus remains focus . . .)

Cuba is an exciting place today, a new country bursting with vitality: it’s a country of projects. The projects fall into two categories, the essential and the inessential ones; and the revolution wisely gives equal importance to both. The Cuban revolution is not a narrow, bigoted, puritanical affair, nor does it let heavy agricultural and industrial programmes exclude other things. After all, the necessity is not there. Cuba is no China; it is a small, highly developed island, rich in material comforts and populated by a cosmopolitan and naturally cultivated people who have always lived surrounded by foreigners, whose intellectuals travelled much—and who are

Two scenes from “*Historias de la Revolución*”, the story of the Cuban revolution.



not only gay and attractive but have a certain inborn flair. They wish with one hand to make social reforms, eliminate the extremes of inequality, eradicate poverty, create new industries to exploit all that the island has to offer, and so on; but at the same time they are culturally idealistic—if they build out of sheer necessity, they are determined to build beautifully. Publishing, printing, music, the theatre—in fact, culture—is their passion. And by culture they mean not a pompous nineteenth-century middle-European idea of national theatres and academic learning: they are spiritually closer to St. Germain des Prés.

Their film industry is a really idealistic venture: the government has truly become a patron in the grand manner. Obviously they must make pictures in their own language, the Spanish language, and thus—as we have seen—they are making pictures for a non-existent market. There is only Cuba itself with a population of some six million. But, like every other achievement of this revolution, nobody ever paused to weigh the risks and count the costs: the Cuban film industry was born out of a wish by Cubans to assert themselves on celluloid, a feeling that good Spanish films could and should be made, and a great lead from Castro, who, feeling that a film industry was a desirable thing in itself, simply threw the doors wide open.

The industry is entirely in the hands of young people. Alfredo Guevara, ex-head of the students' revolutionary movement, is in charge of I.C.A.I.C., the State Film Institute (the Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos). Saul Yelin, who produces the pictures, is cultivated, intellectual and much travelled—he lived in London and studied in Paris and speaks English and French equally fluently. Eduardo Manet, who had fled the stifling atmosphere of Batista's Cuba and studied at the Sorbonne, married a French girl and had published a novel in French, imagined that this was where he would spend his life—when suddenly the great new opportunities in his own country made him come rushing back. Jose García Espinosa, a tough, lively, down-to-earth documentary director, made the first Cuban feature, *Cuba Baila*; Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, thin, tense, nervous and cerebral, directed the second film, *Historias de la Revolución*. Others have a background of New York, Rome, Mexico—as much as those who stayed through the revolution in Havana.

Everyone in I.C.A.I.C. is under contract to the organisation and consequently everyone works at everything all the time. The leading actor in *Historias de la Revolución*, a Cuban Brando, is also kept busy in the office working on distributing, planning and so on (they have taken over about eighty cinemas which are now a national chain; they send 16 mm. units all over the island; they run a weekly newsreel). The buzz of excitement and activity in the Institute makes it one of the most stimulating places I know. There are no basic uncertainties—the field is open, everything is before them, still to be tried, still to be done . . . They possess a studio—one large stage, though they have a giant film city already on the drawing-board—and are just completing a laboratory (their greatest need, since they've never had one and thus have always been crippled by the necessity to send to Miami or Mexico), with which in a matter of weeks they will at last be completely independent. They wisely, before the break with America, stocked up with the very latest Hollywood machinery—from the processing plant and the optical printers through to the cranes and camera dollies—all of which will soon be running, and on East German Agfa film. They have a very glamorous monthly magazine, *Cine Cubano*, a flourishing cartoon department (someone came into the office and said "I want to make cartoons"; "O.K.," they said, and in a year they have mastered the art), and of course an endless round of projections, meetings and discussions.

Castro's movement is quite distinct from the Communist party, but of course the closer they get in alignment with the East the more the classic arguments about engagement and conformity arise among them. There is considerable interest in the Russian cinema, but admiration is truly reserved for the French, coupled with a fascinated interest in what's going on now in England. They are nationalistic without being jingoistic: they feel that Cuban themes exist by the score and that a neo-realist approach is the thing that suits their country at the moment (which has so far only reached the screen as the impersonal, sleek, palm-treed background of B-thrillers): they are anxious to invite people from all over the world to collaborate with them. Zavattini has been there for many months preparing a script; Joris Ivens has completed a long documentary for them; Fellini's cameraman, Martelli, worked there all last year (an unsuccessful experiment—they quarrelled all the time); Buñuel is expected, and invitations have gone out to Visconti and Resnais. The dominant wish is nonconformity: to keep their cinema free, free from left wing clichés and conventions as much as from those of the right.

To date, their achievements are the two features I mentioned and some fifty documentaries. The documentaries vary in quality and the most militant are the most exciting. Some in colour, showing hundreds of thousands of people chanting "Patria o Muerte" while Castro, like a great Shakespeare actor, builds up the climaxes of his violent tirades, have a real quality of visual excitement and martial energy. On the other side, there is a little triumph of Resnais-style cutting called *El Negro*—on the colour problem—which is Eduardo Manet's first attempt at movie making and which reflects a very brilliant and highly sophisticated mind. I also read a script he's just completed on the assassination of a Trujillo colonel—the whole film being a *Rififi*-like telling of every detail of the operation—and believe he is one of the major talents in their set-up.

Of the feature films, *Historias de la Revolución* is the more considerable. *Cuba Baila* is a satire on the terrible forces of snobbery in pre-revolutionary Havana, reflected in the attempts of a mother to give a birthday party for her daughter on a scale above her means. It seems a little old-fashioned, although it is extremely well-made and full of typically Cuban night-club and dancing scenes which are brilliantly animated. *Historias de la Revolución* is consciously influenced by *Paisa*—three unrelated episodes, a resistance story of the city, a slice of life amongst the bearded men in the mountains, and a piece of pure action involving the blowing up of a train and the capture of a town. Again, excellently made, beautifully directed and acted, with striking music (three different composers: the Cubans are rich in this). The achievement artistically is limited by the fact that we have seen almost all these war situations so many times in films of so many nationalities that it all seems familiar ground. The achievement is considerable when one thinks that, despite all the material difficulties of an embryonic film industry, the result is absolutely sure, confident and pulsing with life. It will undoubtedly have an enormous success in Cuba and will rightly fill the audiences there with great pride. Also, it will excite audiences all over the world who are open to the Cuban adventure.

But it's the promise of the future that is the most interesting thing of all. They intend to make seven or eight films a year and have the wish and the means to do pretty well what they want. They are attacking the problem of the Latin American film world right at the source—by being subsidised, they have also become free. They have a chance of doing in the Caribbean what the Poles have done in their country. What will be the effect of this on the rest of Latin America? One good film can be quite a force.



PETER  
JOHN  
DYER



# YOUNG AND INNOCENT

MURDER WAS FRONT-PAGE NEWS when one took one's seat at the cinema in the Thirties. Germany, still reeling from the confessions of Peter Kürten, the Düsseldorf sadist of *M*, and the prognostic, asylum-bred scribbles of Doctor Mabuse's Testament ("Mankind must be thrown into an abyss of terror"), found herself plunged unrespected into fire and blood bath. America, roused by the discovery of secret societies in Detroit, rallied to anti-fascist *exposés* like *The Legion of Terror* and *Black Legion* with much the same nation-wide indignation as had greeted the St. Valentine's Day massacre and *Scarface* a few years earlier. And England? "Nurse Graham Charged", said the flapping news-stand poster, as late as 1940, in Carol Reed's *Girl in the News*. And it spoke from a vanished world.

Made old-fashioned by its passing reference to the black-out, *The Girl in the News* was still an infinitely more persuasive film than Reed's topical thriller *Night Train to Munich*, made the same year. English ways and accents rarely convinced unless linked to a murder headline; foreign accents and affairs never. And Margaret Lockwood's nurse, innocently involved in provincial poisoning and the Assizes, had a conviction her Czech concentration camp prisoner in *Night Train* could never hope to attain. The Thirties' British cinema had always been at home with melodrama; unsubtle, somehow innocent melodrama at that, of an oddly national variety, reflecting the carving up of chorus girls by blonde and blue-eyed ex-officers in seaside hotels, the doping of racehorses, and coffee growing cold over the *News of the World*. This was the world the British cinema understood best: which produced, in Alfred Hitchcock, its one true "critics' director", and in Walter Forde, Carol Reed, George King, Arthur Woods and David MacDonald some half-dozen adept disciples.

They were not, whatever nostalgic apologists may say, exactly subtle directors. They obviously found it impossible in the space of seventy minutes to convey much more than the essence of a story and a broad sense of characterisation.

Hollywood had met both the challenge of sound and the time limitation by the creation of journalists' types—the mouth-piece, the moll, the private eye—each distinguished by his or her ticker-tape dialogue, manners and morals. For lack of original screenwriters and a sufficient diversity of types, Elstree and Denham never really adopted this character system. Instead they stuck to the Conan Doyle and Chesterton tradition, by which a benign clergyman may turn out to be a vengeful ex-convict and a nun to be packing a gun. Badly in need of boldness, self-respect and independence, the British thriller determined to compensate for them in quick, all-change action and robust playing.

There was something pathetic about the way British films craved respectability and international recognition in the Twenties and early Thirties, while at the same time treating the idea of film as art with an air of nervous, self-deprecating levity. On the one hand they sent Hitchcock as an apprentice to Germany, simultaneously importing eminent European directors, cameramen and stars; on the other, convinced that nothing but confusion would come from compressing 500-page novels, and certainly nothing profitable from using original ideas or screenplays, they fell back on ready-made dramatic successes. Inevitably, the three cardinal sins of British production came to be recognised as bad photography and lighting—at its worst flat and static, at its specious best a matter of trapping pools of light inside crouching Germanic sets; slow tempo and pause-laden playing; and the misuse of willing talent.

No director bore clearer witness to this mishandling than Alfred Hitchcock. Recognised almost from the start as that gift-horse to the British cinema, an innovator, he was condemned for the eight years following *The Lodger* to filming Galsworthy, Philpotts, O'Casey, Coward, Clemence Dane and Ivor Novello. Whether or not he regarded himself at the time

Above: Jack Hulbert and gang leader Ralph Richardson in "Bulldog Jack".



as being inhibited by respectability, many of those films' by now legendary injections of "cinema"—subjective impressions of sea-sickness, characters' voices intensified and multiplied into rhythmic chorus, thoughts voiced interminably on the sound-track over a sequence of Herbert Marshall shaving—look suspiciously today like desperate attempts at artificial respiration. Certainly *Murder* (1930) must be written off as a total disaster, incomprehensibly ill-conceived in comparison with other thrillers (Victor Saville's *The W Plan*, Forde's *Rome Express*) of the day. Twice, during those eight years, Hitchcock made it plain where his and our best interests lay, in *Blackmail* and, though only intermittently, *Number Seventeen*. Yet the former was followed by *Juno and the Paycock* and *The Skin Game*; the latter by *Lord Camber's Ladies* and *Waltzes from Vienna*.

Obviously Hitchcock's reputation as a model of compliance and as a critics' director had done him no good. His films had been largely attended either by people who "like to see a good play" or by esoteric ciné-club types bent on seeking out all manner of functionless technical tricks and often non-existent subtleties. Eventually Hitchcock lost patience ("I hate this sort of stuff," he was heard to complain during the filming of *Waltzes from Vienna*), threw compliance overboard and went in for making thrillers for the unsophisticated. *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, the first of his celebrated Gaumont-British talkies, was outright melodrama, deficient in structure and flawed in its logic. But its very recklessness gave it an excitement hitherto unknown in the British cinema.

Kidnapping, hypnosis, codes inside shaving brushes, brilliantined sharpshooters, scarred and smiling anarchists, sun-worshippers and sieges in Wapping—these were among the outlandish elements that went to make up Hitchcock's declaration of independence; and since it paid off, and was good cinema, it was by way of being a starter's pistol for other film-makers.

## 2

The climate of their twopence coloured world was a heady one, elementary in its dialogue ("Well, Jocko, what d'you make of it?" Bulldog Drummond asks his terrier when a warning note wrapped round a stone comes hurtling through his window); often baroque in setting and character, with mad young peers eluding one-eyed footmen to strangle brides in baronial halls (George King's *Case of the Frightened Lady*); purely cinematic perhaps only in moments of dire peril. At any rate, and though reaching back twenty years or more, these are the moments which an addict's memory harbours.

Wilfrid Lawson's seedy Meister, a lady-killer in both senses of the word, playing the library piano and receiving the news that a funeral wreath bearing his name has been delivered at the front door; the glint of the spear from the library wall, hurled through the darkness and transfixing him as he stands in the police-guarded empty room (Forde's *The Gaunt Stranger*). Emyln Williams as the supercilious and pedantic English headmaster, betraying his second identity—a hunch-backed French moneylender—when he absent-mindedly whistles the murderer's French "theme tune" during an innocent chat with the detective; his suicide (to remind us that nobody's as sanguinary as the English when they put their minds to it), when he cuts his throat before the horrified eyes of the hero, whom he has overpowered and straddled (MacDonald's *Dead Men Tell No Tales*). Leslie Banks in Count Zaroff vein, monkey upon mantled shoulder, offering to show Lilli Palmer his museum of torture instruments much as other men offer a sight of their etchings (*The Door With Seven Locks*, a film Franju might conceivably have enjoyed).

Irene Handl's malevolent invalid, demented with insomnia, staggering through her cluttered bedroom towards the medicine cupboard in search of drugs (Reed's *Girl In The News*). Tod Slaughter's gaslight rakehell, forewarning his murders by the awful appearance at Paris windows of the moron foster-brother whom he keeps between whiles in a cage

in the cellar (George King's *The Face At The Window*—a far more convincing, because traditional, morality melodrama than the Hitchcock-Du Maurier *Jamaica Inn*; and did not Slaughter's raised shoulder, flickering eyelid and springy step reveal at whose barnstorming feet Charles Laughton must once have sat?).

Durable rather than trustworthy (so many of the films have gone for good), these confessions of a teenage no-brow were virtually all that Richard Roud, an immune American, had to go on when he rashly took me up on my suggestion of a pre-war British thriller season at the National Film Theatre. The season is now a current fact. To make it so required extensive viewing; and the quick discovery that the pulp, so long as it offered knockabout pleasure, was often acceptable where incipient pretensions to style and significance were not; and that telegraphese was generally more imaginative than well-meaning slice-of-life.

It is the big prestige film one no longer responds to: the pedestrian glamour of the Denham pictures, such as Victor Saville's *Dark Journey*, with their establishing shots and their miles of montage, their ineffably refined actresses articulating wicked cosmopolitan dialogue, and their wearying insistence on sex as being the major moral and emotional tribulation facing all spies. At least *Dark Journey* restricted its glossy unreality to Stockholm and Paris, and permitted a powerfully monocled Conrad Veidt to hypnotise it into an odd kind of passionate self-belief.

*Poison Pen*, on the other hand, was a chillingly unpassionate example of a British film spreading atmosphere thickly over the English countryside like fertiliser. It consisted of the usual crop of refined juveniles on horseback and gratuitously quaint villagers, all spouting the kind of muted, meaningless dialogue one associates with the panic of being dragooned into a game of charades; and planned a distinguished actress, Flora Robson as the vicarage spinster whose anonymous letters cause suicide and murder, down to a few climactic moments of throbbing passion switched on as if she were a Hoover.

Denham's *On The Night Of The Fire* aimed even more misguidedly at a significance beyond its station. The story of a Newcastle barber who steals a hundred pounds and is driven by blackmail to murder, it was obviously meant as the kind of exercise in fate and Nemesis appropriate to a bleakly depressed industrial slum. To drive the lesson home, Brian Desmond Hurst placed his camera firmly in the front row of the stalls, instructed his players (Ralph Richardson and Diana Wynyard) to chop off their H's, his photographer (Günther Krampf) to flood their spiritual and material darkness in shafts of Teutonic light, and then sat back to reap the applause of those to whom symbolism, studio-created squalor and the falsely poetic are all praiseworthy devices so long as they avoid human insight and the direct statement.

## 3

Not that the sort of direct statement liable to be made inside Gothic mansions was necessarily any better. Only the most conscientious addict would sit through the first hour of *The Terror*, with its boarding-house repartee and its detective's tedious masquerade as a silly ass drunkard, for the sake of a decisive confrontation in the crypt between a mad, organ-playing monk (Wilfrid Lawson) and a walled-up, half-dead victim (Alastair Sim) covered in plaster. As for *Bulldog Drummond at Bay*, one reel of John Lodge in polo-neck and breeches guying a country yokel, torturing an intruder and carrying on a very British line in twin-bed *badinage* with a fox-furred vamp, is enough to test any addict's tolerance.

Nevertheless, and despite its dated *Thin Man* railleury, hygienic sex and largely unfunny comic relief of bungling subordinates, there was a school of British thrillers as effective as Hollywood's *Chans* and *Motos* and as national as Duvivier's *Tête d'Un Homme*. Its formula was wit—wit of cutting, wit of angle, wit of contrast. Given a really good script, Forde and Hitchcock found it infallible. Given a script





with a significant flaw in the formula, Thorold Dickinson made in *The Arsenal Stadium Mystery* (1939) an interesting failure.

The idea was sound enough. Detection mitigated by football (or the other way round, depending on one's point of view), with the murder finally solved through a previous death and a coroner's report brought to grim life by the camera's dramatisation of dull legal files. Here, and in a camera-eye tracking shot, taken at the rapid pace of a suspicious detective, through two rooms to a close-up of a dead girl sprawled across a bed, followed by a cut to the detective whipping off his horn-rims, Dickinson's wit of cutting and wit of angle were impeccable. It was the right kind of contrast which was missing. Instead of building up a chain of juxtaposed incongruities, the script mixed in the real (personal appearances by the Arsenal team, documentary shots of football practice) with the totally unreal (a handful of neurotic juvenile actors as the opposing team, *outré* rehearsals for a police pantomime). Convincingly vital, painstaking investigation was mixed in with dead dialogue ("Great Scott, you're almost a human being, Inspector!") and enervating jokes about funny hats and epsom salts instead of sugar in the tea. The result was synthetic, the incongruity merely flippant, and not all Leslie Banks's chameleon attack as the detective could persuade us otherwise.

Walter Forde showed a basic flair for the right kind of contrast, the juxtaposition of adventure and the commonplace, as early as 1932 in his now slightly dated *Rome Express*. Gordon Harker's suburban golf club bore bought his ticket for Rome, and five hours later found himself playing poker with a murderer. *Bulldog Jack* (1935), a parody of Sapper's parody of a hero, had a slow and (in the Hulbert Brothers' hands) brutishly humourless start. But as soon as Forde placed Ralph Richardson's giddy master mind, all lunatic wig and swordstick, inside the alarmingly realistic atmosphere of deserted Tube stations, gloomy tunnels and the British Museum, the film sprang to vivid life. There was a well-cut chase up and down the Underground staircase, and a mad train ride towards the terminus and destruction, as good as anything in screen melodrama.

In *The Four Just Men* (1939), an Empire Loyalist's prophetic nightmare about a plot to destroy us by blocking the Suez canal, the contrast lay between the violence of death and the innocence of its agents: a poisonous scratch from a suitcase at Victoria, a stuck lift, the towel-rail of a bath. If only the boyishness of Griffith Jones had been a little lined, the bright breezy resolution of Anna Lee's archetypal crime reporter a little tarnished, one's enjoyment of this absurdly jingoistic record of impersonation and comradely enterprise might have been complete.

#### 4

Forde gave every indication that he found making thrillers easy: the squalid lodging at the start of *Inspector Hornleigh* provided a foolproof setting for murder; the dead M.P.'s charred hand in *The Four Just Men* made its own terse statement; the guns thrust into frame in *Bulldog Jack* were, like all guns, photogenic. But then the blueprint already existed, in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. And where so much of Forde has dated, Hitchcock's grasp of timing and suspense seems as assiduous yet fresh today as it must have done 25 years ago.

Certainly none of the other Hitchcock films offer themselves as readily for scratch analysis. *Sabotage* is altogether more serious, witness the chill on the saboteurs' conversation in the aquarium, the callousness of the bus explosion, Oscar Homolka's unassertive, human performance. *Young and*

*Variations on melodrama. Above: Cathleen Nesbitt and Leslie Banks in "The Door with Seven Locks". Centre: Hugh Wakefield and Peter Lorre in "The Man Who Knew Too Much". Below: a children's party halts a flight from the police. Nova Pilbeam, Derrick de Marney, Basil Radford and Mary Clare in "Young and Innocent".*



*Innocent* has an unmatched *insouciance* which almost reconciles one to a story chosen less for its watertightness than its incidentals: a children's party presided over by an interfering, autocratic aunt; the sudden collapse of an occupied car—shades of *Psycho*!—down a hidden mineshaft. But the speed, the streamlined relevancy, the blank refusal to bring heavy apparatus to bear on its strange and exciting implausibilities, all confirm *The Man Who Knew Too Much* as Hitchcock's most characteristic formula film.

Take the opening sequence. A man is murdered and a child is kidnapped. Jaunty Englishman (Leslie Banks) with a heavy line in Coward parody; tweedy wife; smarmy-haired and -mannered sharpshooter; rumped little fat man with a chiming watch and a hysterical laugh—all the main characters are collected and their traits established. There is no playing for position: Peter Lorre is brought face to face with Pierre Fresnay, his smile drains into his boots, and Fresnay dies. He dies so quietly, Lorre is giggling so loudly at a knot of dancers entangled in some knitting wool, that no one quite knows what has happened. Nor is there any time wasted in creating atmosphere: a head-on shot of a ski-run establishes the place, a track back from a window the danger, a circle of hands around the bullet-hole in the glass the murder.

The film's mainstay is its refined sense of the incongruous. A dentist is given his own gas . . . "You're not going to leave your friend, sir, are you?" a dumpy little body asks reprovingly, producing a gun from her shopping bag . . . A watch chimes, the camera pans right, and Lorre greets his prisoner with shy pleasure and a girlish "Hell-o!". Throughout terror and levity rub shoulders; personal discomposure, never more than momentary, switches sides constantly. This exact sense of antithesis and shifting balance owes much to the playing of Peter Lorre, which is all contrasts and nuance. Smiling at his own occasionally likeable jokes, reacting with coarse relish to the discomfiture of others; strikingly scarred and hair-styled yet shabbily ordinary in his clothes; chain-smoking; neurotically attached to a woman who rarely leaves his side; given to alarming facial spasms of contempt, fury or disappointment, Lorre presents a portrait of suppressed sadism so definitive that one suspects it must have struck a chord somewhere in Hitchcock's own cat-and-mouse heart.

5

To undertake research for an article such as this is to re-admit hopes of discovering that old *ignis-fatuus*, the lost British masterpiece. Though the territory of the thriller is as likely a hunting-ground as any, the masterpiece remains elusive. The best I can offer in the way of a valediction to the Thirties is two rediscoveries of a sort: films unseen since their original release, one a harbinger of Hitchcock's defection to Hollywood, the other of the resurrection of the serious British film.

One can see why *Secret Agent* was regarded at the time as disappointing. Readers of the Somerset Maugham story, *The Hairless Mexican*, upon which the film was based, knew that Ashenden went to Switzerland to prevent the carrying of important information into enemy territory. The spy is unknown; all that Ashenden is told is that a certain district is suspect; and the film begins by concentrating on the overwhelming difficulty of his mission only to minimise its importance once he has arrived by becoming preoccupied with the romantic skirmishes of the three young protagonists. Since these are merely projected, pretty bloodlessly, by John Gielgud (Ashenden), Madeleine Carroll (the "wife" provided by Headquarters) and Robert Young (a suspiciously guileless American), the suspense and light romance play contradictory rather than complementary parts, and the result is an almost fatal imbalance.

Today, however, one takes it more for granted that the parts of a Hitchcock thriller are nearly always greater than the

whole, and here, though the string is weak, the beads are pearls. The opening in London during a bomb-raid is masterly, with its fake funeral, its one-armed man lighting his cigarette on a candle beside the empty coffin, the pulling down of the blinds and the shadowed entrance of the "corpse". The centre piece, the inadvertent murder of the wrong man, is screwed up to the most callous, nerve-wracking pitch imaginable—both before, in the cross-cutting between the innocent man climbing to his death and his agitated dog in a room miles away; and after, in the café celebration, with the tell-tale button spinning around in the bowl and the assassin flirting with a buxom girl with the same professional indifference that he brought to his miscalculated murder. Here and elsewhere—in the drawn-out, monotonous single note of the church organ over which a body lies slumped, in the chase through the chocolate factory-espionage bureau—Hitchcock lays on sound in much the same way as the Chinese are said to delight in water-torture. And his sagacity in casting Peter Lorre as the Mexican killer is rewarded by a performance which makes the film itself as uncommon as it is unsentimentally cruel.

His preoccupation in *Secret Agent* with the spectacular (the final train disaster), the technical, the cosmopolitan and the spuriously sophisticated, his feeling (increased by 1938 and *The Lady Vanishes*) that his world of erupting melodrama was being taken for granted and that he was perhaps beginning to repeat himself—all this led Hitchcock inevitably to Hollywood and a new stage in his development. His world of menace issuing from ordinary, shabby English surroundings was by now accepted; and it was left to a comparatively little-known young director, Arthur Woods, to take the romance out of it with a murder-story, *They Drive By Night*, whose dialogue and direction aspired to the best Hollywood level. Set against an authentic background of suburban Palais de Danse and the wet expanse of the lorry-drivers' Great North Road; finely acted by Emlyn Williams as an ex-convict hunted for a murder he hadn't committed and Ernest Thesiger as a preciously sedate sex-maniac, this exciting film carried the Hitchcock formula a stage further in that it concentrated on getting a *realistic* twist out of every situation. The settings were nowhere romanticised; the characters—given their straightforward problems—were afforded every chance to show with intensity their interior stresses.

If audiences and producers didn't much share the director's appetite for personal and private battle, this was perhaps understandable. It was 1939, Britain was at war, and the battles in everyone's minds were of a different sort. Arthur Woods himself appears to have disappeared as a film-maker after the war. But he is worth remembering. His achievement, with this one film, was in its own way as unique as Hitchcock's. And one cannot help wondering whether, war or no war, and certainly in the context of atrocities like *On The Night Of The Fire*, the British cinema was really ready for him.



*Secret agents meet at the Zoo:*  
Austin Trevor and Oscar Homolka in "Sabotage".



Eisenstein developed his theories about colour in several essays, and at his death left unfinished the article "Colour Film", which was published in the collection Notes of a Film Director. This "autobiographical fragment" is complementary to the more theoretical studies. It was published last July in the Soviet journal Literaturnaya Gazeta, and has been translated by Jay Leyda.

**W**AS IT FORTUNATE, or merely lucky—everything that led me to my first work in colour? In any case, the role of chance is unquestionable. It formed a chain that extended right into the actual work. And it was such a chain of chance and unexpected factors that showed a way towards solutions for the most fundamental problems of colour.

It was a very long time ago that colour in cinema first captured my attention. I must have seen some of the first examples of colour cinema—the *féeries* of Méliès, tinted by hand. A submarine kingdom, where warriors in bright golden armour were concealed in the jaws of green whales, and blue and pink fairies grew from sea-foam.

Not long after, there were attempts at more natural colour. I cannot be sure what system or technique was used, but I recall that it was about 1910 or 1912 when such films began to be shown in Riga. Actually they were exhibited in only one

cinema, in Wermann Park, which bore the grand title of "Kino Kultura", notwithstanding the fact that these "scientific" short films were accompanied, week after week, by chapters of *Fantomas* and *Vampires*. The coloured short films always seemed to have a pinkish tone, whether they showed the white sails of yachts skimming over an ultramarine sea, or variously coloured fruits and flowers being arranged by girls with flaming red or straw-yellow hair.

Our own first trial in the field of screen colour was the familiar hand-coloured red flag of *Potemkin*, followed by the less well-known montage of contrastingly toned short shots in *The General Line*—in the circle watching the separator, and in the bull's wedding.

It was not until 1939 that colour entered my work as a genuine problem. I planned a film about the Ferghana Canal: its theme was the struggle for water, and it was to have the form of a triptych, beginning with a blossoming Central Asia and the superb irrigation system developed in antiquity. But the power of man over water perished in fratricidal wars and the campaigns of Tamerlane—and the sands of the desert covered everything. Then the misery of sandy deserts under tsarism, when each stray drop of water had to be squeezed from ditches where the most perfected irrigation system in the world had once flourished. And, finally, the wonder of the first collective victory: the Ferghana Canal, built by the farmers of Uzbekistan, a lasting testimony to brotherhood and socialism.

On the very eve of the beginning of work on the first part of the triptych, production was halted. The composition of the whole was suspended helplessly in the air. And soon the whole film was cancelled.

And I went to work on the staging of *Die Walküre* at the Bolshoi Opera. In my treatment of the last scene (the Magic Fire) I searched for means of fusing the elements in Wagner's orchestration with the changing colours of light on the stage.

Almost simultaneously with this work on Wagner, a serious proposal was brought to me to enter the field of the colour film fully. As one might expect, the proposed theme came under the heading of natural "colourfulness". It was in the brightest tones that the film administration painted this vivid as well as ideologically interesting and acceptable theme—the subject of Giordano Bruno. You see, Italy . . . Renaissance costumes . . . Burning at the stake.

Any other theme would have been presented similarly. The colourful past was inevitably sought on the border between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. This theme, with its colourful costumes (these everyone insisted on—exactly like a terrier with a slipper in his teeth), was brought to me by one of the readers of the Film Committee. The subject was the plague. Why plague, and not cholera? Or smallpox, or typhus?

This idea, however, attracted me (although not for long: it was recorded at the time by one sketch) not for reasons of colour, but for an exactly opposite reason. This was the possibility of building the film on the spreading plague engulfing everything in *blackness*.

It was in another setting, and on other material, that this same idea—of a wonderful (and vivid) richness of life absorbed by an engulfing death—had excited me once before. This was how I had solved the key section of a drama about gold, in a film project (with completed scenario) based on Blaise Cendrars's novel, *Gold*. This romanticised biography of Captain Sutter was to have been made in America, for Paramount. The destructive search for gold on his Californian land, which brought ruin and ravage to his blossoming estate and to himself, I wanted to express through something I had actually seen, leaving an impression on me that still works with the persistence of a Californian gold-digger's dredge.

Eisenstein (in policeman's helmet) during a 1929 visit to Hans Richter's Soho studio. Others in the group include Hans Richter (seated, left), Len Lye (wearing hat, right), and Basil Wright (standing, to left of Len Lye).

An  
autobiographical  
fragment  
by  
SERGEI  
EISENSTEIN

# ONE PATH TO COLOUR







*"Ivan the Terrible": "... the whole mass of black-gowned oprichniki".*

Still to be seen then, as in Sutter's day, were mountains of crushed stone, thrown up from half-exhausted mines, and covering the fields all around. Under a grey, soulless, layer of rock perished blossoming orchards, fields, ploughed land, meadows. Inexorably, endlessly, and unrestrainably, moved a wave of stone, advancing over the green land and pitilessly trampling down, for the sake of gold, the living victories of life.

The Gold Rush of 1848 brought thousands of prospectors to California, their number many times exceeding the number whose labours might have extracted the gold with profit. It is now difficult to imagine how these people, crazed by the gold fever, could have been induced to go through what they did.

Now, however, by means of a small image from my own experience, I can easily imagine the typhoon of mad passions that burst out in this elemental pursuit of gold. It was considerably later, in the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic, that I happened to be travelling in the mountains at a place where gold had recently been discovered. My companion and guide stooped down and scraped together a few handfuls of muddy earth. Then he placed the clods of earth in a tin vessel like a soup tureen, and the earth was carefully washed there. And suddenly at the bottom could be seen a few grains. Gold!

Involuntarily, one had the sensation of the earth moving beneath one's feet, opening its womb, and releasing through the dirt of its surface, overgrown with clumps of grass, millions upon millions of almost imperceptible grains of golden sand—of gold!

One can easily imagine people throwing themselves on this earth, people intoxicated by this contact with the riches scattered beneath the soles of their boots, people ready to murder the owners of any feet that have already dared to step on this sea of gold concealed only by a dull shroud of earth... The feet of thousands of such madmen trampled Sutter's land, thousands of hands ripped it open and pulled it apart, the teeth of thousands of people who had raced from the ends of the earth were ready to sink into each other's throats for any shred of this land which might conceal in its bosom a strange harvest of pale yellow metal.

The flowering paradise of Californian gardens and fields cultivated by Captain Sutter was invaded and trampled down. And Sutter was ruined... But the proud old man hurled at

the invading hordes thousands of law-suits, in answer to the arbitrary confiscation of his land. Sutter's possessions had been vast at that time.

Within a few years, the tiny mission of St. Francis grew into the big and noisy city of San Francisco. Contemporary engravings show how it happened. The bay was choked with barges and ships which had docked anywhere a mooring rope could be tied. Ships dropped their anchors in the bay and remained there forever. Spaces between the ships were bridged with planks and then filled in with sand. Huts were built on the decks; holds were transformed into basements; the joined decks became streets and lanes. The invaders swarmed over the ships as the mountains of crushed stone overflowed into the green meadows, as the secretly shifting sands covered the former green paradise of Central Asia's salty deserts.

And suddenly, on to this octopus—sucking in the settlement of boats and barges, and eating into the surface of shore and surrounding hills—one man, tall and determined, hurls his challenge. And now another cloud approached California.

This time it was a *black* flock. In the 1850s lawyers wore a long frock-coat and a tall top-hat, shaggy like the ones we've seen in portraits of Lincoln and his colleagues. Hundreds of black frock-coats and top hats—a flock of ravens and ruffled black eagles—alighted on the city of San Francisco. An unprecedented war was engaged: the war of a whole city against one man. This third stratum over the once fruitful lands of Captain Sutter was black and frightful; you could see their silhouettes amongst the ships' rigging and against the lamps hung in the coastal fog and blackness of California's night.

This black flock was an image which stood living and magnetic before me. Perhaps it was also based on an actual impression? Where, how, and in what circumstances, now or before the war, could one see tens or even hundreds of black top-hats, wandering among ancient low buildings, vanishing in the dusk and suddenly reappearing in the yellow light of candles, filtering down from small latticed windows? Is there really a place, not merely in the lithographs of Daumier but in life, where one can see such a fantastic vision?

Imagine—there is!

Under the top-hats, though, you do not see beards and moustaches. Not even down on the upper lip—for I don't



suppose that the oldest of their wearers is yet twenty. But the mysterious light of dusk conceals exact age in a generalised silhouette, and the silhouettes of young figures, immature wearers of top-hats, moving through these lanes and half-lights, further aggravates the fantasy. These might be gnomes escaped from the brain of a Hoffmann, or the peculiar inhabitants of a frightening tale by Poe.

Actually, they are—boys. Not boys, really, but lads—the sons of privileged English families who can send their offspring to be educated at Eton. I refrained from mentioning the vicinity of Windsor Castle, or their white, round, turned-down collars and striped trousers, just to keep you from guessing whom I was hinting at.

In an inspection of Windsor Castle, with its collection of Leonardo's notebooks and Holbein's drawings, I was also taken by my friend Professor Isaacs—in red whiskers and bowler, with inevitable rolled umbrella on arm—to visit nearby Eton. Here was the first link in an English educational system that forged fragile and degenerate or overfed and spoiled boys into stern and implacable, harsh and heartless gentlemen, who never shout that they have been placed in charge of our globe, as do the less prudent Germans, but firmly believe that this is their mission, appointed for the glory of Britain, Queen of the Seas . . .

\* \* \*

An avalanche of blackness, devouring all colour before it—this is an image which has long waited in the circle of ideas dear to me. From time to time new impressions nourish it: the trip to Windsor, a page from Cendrars's novel, the mountains of crushed stone near Sacramento, and even a flock of black eagles settling on the corpses of horses dragged from a Mexican bull-fighting arena. How sedately the black eagles sit on the walls around the rear courtyards of the arena in Merida, capital of Yucatan. Waiting . . .

However—in the agenda of my creative plans both Giordano Bruno and the plague\* swiftly gave way to another candidate—a hero almost mathematically calculable. Just as, by observing the orbits of various heavenly bodies, the planet Uranus was computed *a priori* long before it was actually seen by a high-powered telescopic lens.

When sound came to films, what subject did it bring? The biographies of musicians.

And what subjects were brought by the arrival of colour? The biographies of painters.

And colour and sound together?

Both have been exhausted, so we must look for a third subject. What about the biography of a poet? This is how the idea was born for a film on Pushkin.

And from it rose *Ivan Grozny*.†

Then came the war; and then, victory. Out of conquered Germany came an avalanche of loathsome German colour films, but also—a negative with three colour strata.

Here starts a new chain of chances, after the war, adding to a chain of ideas about colour that had begun before the war.

Of course, a longing for colour grows directly from work on audiovisual counterpoint. For it is colour, colour and again colour to the very end, which can solve the problems of proportion and adduction in producing a general unity of sound and visual factors.

Once upon a time, enthusiastically greeting the arrival of sound in films (Pudovkin and Alexandrov signed with me a statement "on the sound film"), I wrote about colour (in "The Third Dimension in Cinema") that it could bring nothing new in principle into the area of film form. Then we had only a hint of the possibilities for audiovisual counterpoint. Then the

image had only begun to be torn apart by the growth into sound film.

By now, practical work in audiovisual cinema is already a concrete investment in the business of developing cinema. And sound, endeavouring to be embodied in the visual image, powerfully beats against its black and white limitations, shrinking the passions that require a full fusion with the image. The higher forms of organic relationships between the melodic outline of music and the tonal structure of systematically blended colour shots are possible only with the entrance of colour into the cinema.

However—from general phrases to business. From a tirade to a history of the comic and sad, consoling and depressing, exciting and optimistic (but more frequently distressing) soarings aloft and pitching downfalls on the road to concrete work in colour film, in two sequences of *Ivan the Terrible*, Part Two.

What *didn't* happen here!

There was the fact that Prokofiev left Alma-Ata before I did. But Ivan's feast and the dances of the *oprichniki* could not be filmed without the music being written and recorded in advance. And consequently this obliged us to transfer the filming of the feast and dance to Moscow.

But that wasn't all. Prokofiev became ill, and amidst his obligations to both *War and Peace* and *Cinderella* he could not find time that summer to give me the needed orchestrations. Autumn came and winter approached. The finished set had stood waiting since summer. The orchestration was delayed.

Just at that time, it happened that a conference on colour was organised at the Dom Kino. Not so much on the desolate spectacle before us as it was an argument and discussion on something that none of us had yet had a chance to work on. The emptiness of the discussion was irritating. Most irritating of all, though, was the free supplement to the discussion: screenings of examples of the colour creations of the American and German industries, along with those few significant attempts of our own before the war to use two and three-colour negative systems—attempts vaunted and boasted. Now on our screens also could be shown "a miserable splendour of costume" and "an imitation painted cheek". Irritation is an excellent creative stimulus.

Suddenly, amidst all this imported vulgarity, a film document in colour appeared on the screen: *The Potsdam Conference*. Some parts of this film, as colour, were horrible. But then came a series of interiors in the palace of Cecilienhof. In one room a blindingly red carpet covered the whole area of the screen. Cutting diagonally across it was a row of white arm-chairs upholstered in red. Colour was functioning!

Furthermore, the Chinese Pavilion at Sans Souci was shown in a few shots—and the gilded Chinese figures also came off well. Of even greater importance, we could also see on these figures high-lighted reflections from the surrounding greenery and from the white marble stairs.

So . . . the red works. The gold also looks right. And, of course, the black does, too. Blue might also work. Perhaps it's worth the risk of a trial.

The set for Ivan's feast had stood since the summer. The feast must burst like an explosion between the dark scene of the conspiracy against the Tsar and the gloomy scene of the attempt to kill him. Why couldn't this explosion be—in colour? Colour would participate in the explosion of the dance. And then, at the end of the feast, imperceptibly flowing back into black and white photography, the tragic tone of the accidental death of Prince Vladimir Andreyevich, killed by the murderer sent by his mother to kill the Tsar . . .

And how to blend from the preceding colour sequence—and in my style and spirit—the black of the cassocks with the golden caftans of the *oprichniki*, and then the blacks in the cassocks of the *oprichniki* with the gold in Vladimir's velvets, and, most of all, the whole mass of black-gowned *oprichniki*

\* Igor Lukovsky's scenario on Bruno was finally filmed in 1956, at the Kiev Studio, directed by Arkadi Naroditsky as *Immortal Fire*.

† The colour sketches for the Pushkin project that led to *Ivan* were published in facsimile in *Iskusstvo Kino*, March, 1959.

(Continued on page 102)



# FILM REVIEWS

## LE TROU

UNEXPECTEDLY, PERHAPS SIGNIFICANTLY, Jacques Becker's last film *Le Trou* (Gala) abandons his airy, dashing and beloved Paris—the grassy clearing in front of the joiner's shop in *Casque d'Or*, the sunlit rue where Antoine cycled home to his Antoinette—to find his most exact *mise en scène* within the four walls of a prison cell. The key clatters in the lock. The heavy door opens wide. We are admitted into a private world, harsh and intimate, Cell 6, Division II of the Santé. Four long-sentence convicts live here, their day-to-day incarceration made bearable by quiet comradeship and a determination to keep themselves occupied: they make the best of the monotony attending the folding of cardboard boxes; they feel the beauty of a slice of soft white bread; in so many words, Roland, Manu, Monseigneur and Geo try to preserve themselves as human beings.

Like Becker in his personal Credo, they believe in entertaining friendship. When Gaspard, a younger prisoner, is transferred here from another cell, they have to be thoroughly satisfied of his criminal credentials before accepting him. For theirs is a closed world, complete in itself, and far more democratic than the system which orders it in the person of a deceptively mild Governor, a father-figure in tinted glasses who sends his uniformed representatives to disturb them by the hour. Theirs, too, is a more natural hierarchy, graded according to the severity of each man's sentence, its system one of fair distribution of labour; more natural, above all, because built upon a shared confidence. They plan to escape. Otherwise they have no physical contact with the outside world. And when this world still contrives to impinge on them, in the form of a minutely-inspected food parcel or a woman visitor, the result is disillusionment and degradation. One longs for them to be back in their cell, there to enjoy the assurance offered by their enclosed masculine community.

The picture almost breathes this overwhelming, bare-chested masculinity, squeezed within four walls and finding its distinctive outlet in fellow-feeling, shyness, even tenderness of a kind. It is a tough world which resents and avoids violence, though the threat of violence is ever-present. And when it finally has to break out, as inevitably and decisively as Manda's involuntary act of murder in *Casque d'Or*, the result is catastrophic. The whole elaborate texture of human feelings and actions crumbles. The subtle, handsome faces become fearfully distorted as if in protest. But up to the climax the faces retain their magic immobility. They are rough-hewn; feelings barely register on them; are, indeed, rarely expressed at all. They are just felt, as their life is just lived. Becker himself, the sixth man in the cell, recognises and develops this. He believes implicitly in the genuineness and importance of their feelings. He works logically towards an outcome. Five strong men are in a cell, folding cardboard boxes. Well, it is an obvious corollary that they should want to clear out. Muscles should be used, respected for what they are; and we can best honour their effort if we follow it from start to finish.

It is this basic intention which helps lift *Le Trou* out of the category of prison-escape drama. It is the story of an undertaking—and indeed an heroic one—which just happens to take place in prison. Becker neither condemns nor acquits his prisoners: their past history, all they may have done previously, loses its importance the moment they begin digging. What really counts is that "value of effort" which Becker has always respected. Five men with equal chances up against a monstrous mass of concrete: in its own way fair odds. And the plan is realised step by step before our eyes, with a rare visual authority. The first onslaught on the concrete comes

as a shock because of the tremendous noise of the hammering. Nervously enthralled by the hypnotic concentration of this scene, the spectator would even lend a hand himself if it would make things go that much quicker. The hole widens, deepens, springs to tactile life in a single four-minute shot. No tricky bridging of the time element by means of timorous cut-aways: this isn't one of those jobs where a rapid montage sequence would serve as well as the actual effort involved. It is hard and painstaking, rather like Truffaut's response to Antoine's run to the sea in *Les quatre cents coups*. Only when the first, successful trial of strength has convinced us that these five are adequate to the images of lengthy toil on the screen, does Becker permit the subsequent phases of the work to dissolve into each other.

The toil and the battle give the five back their virility and their self-respect. And as shift follows shift, so the relationships become more complex, personalities develop, hidden tensions break the surface. The escape plan becomes an epic of endeavour, and one demanding terrific discipline. Every stroke of the iron bar must tell, every line on the face. And it is sadly ironic that a plan which moves concrete, forms temperament, lends dignity, should finally collapse because of a hesitant facial expression betrayed by the fifth man, Gaspard, the only one who does express himself explicitly and whose face is not drawn so hard as the others.

It has become tempting to search for hidden meanings in prison-escape stories. *Un Condamné à Mort* . . . almost begs for comparison. But in *Le Trou* there are no refined precision workers like Bresson's Fontaine, only solid iron against concrete; the faces are immobile not in the service of a stylistic conception but because life has masked them that way; the ballet of hands serves not an aesthetic but a practical purpose; and the spiritual motif is underlined not by a Mozart mass but by the rasping of a file. The rediscovery and presentation of the commonplace has always been at the root of Becker's legendary stylishness. Similarly his approach to all forms of human conduct has always been serious, but never schematised, his response immediate, but level-headed. His imagery could hardly be more succinct. When Geo suffers a cave-in of debris and Roland digs desperately to free him, the rescue process is summed up in a shot of Roland's hand groping for Geo's, then the one hand folding tightly over the other. And though the escapers must fail, unlike Bresson's Fontaine, they are still assured their moral victory. Becker's idealism remains intact, and the only real loser is Gaspard, the traitor, because his loss is a moral one.



"Le Trou".





Kaji confronts the Kempeitai: the execution scene from "No Greater Love".

Becker's craftsmanship is inseparable from his vision. Both are equally assured. When Manu files away in pre-arranged stages, five strokes of the file to every pause, it seems only natural for the camera to rest first on the file, then the face, looking up, listening, then back to the file, then to his companion's face, also listening. This selective presentation of objects affords many examples of concentrated visual *frisson*: the toothbrush periscope, the burning paper in the well-like hole, and so on. In such a tight human context objects assume an extraordinary expressive meaning, contrasting with the abstract refinement of Bresson's spoon and wooden splinters. A single, long-held laconic shot of a table upon which a guard probes and slices the entire contents of a prisoner's food parcel, becomes an almost physically painful essay in humiliation. And the withheld and uncalculated playing of the non-professionals (the five prisoners) is never for a moment out of key.

Finally, the ending. A last, concentrated burst of violence, the image—and with it Becker's whole life-work—fades away, and softly Rubinstein's "Melodie" can be heard over the credits. Somehow it sums up an attitude which was at one and the same time tough and tender, savage and humane, a rare amalgam whose assurance shames the simulated simplicity and humanity of so many liberally-slanted films. "Life is worth the living" was Becker's guiding philosophy, whether your beloved tickles your ear while you doze on a river bank, or you set out to escape from the Santé. And one asks for no deeper philosophy from a masterpiece which, unkindly and inappropriately, turned out to be a swan song.

ROBERT VAS

## NO GREATER LOVE and ROAD TO ETERNITY

IN THESE TWO FILMS, part of an uncompleted trilogy based on a six-volume Japanese best-seller, Masaki Kobayashi states the dilemma of the thinking Japanese during the last war. At enormous length and without reserve, he details the sufferings of a young Japanese pacifist called Kaji who finds himself unable to resolve a repetitive series of situations in which he is at once the oppressor—as a labour supervisor in a mine, as some kind of N.C.O. in the Imperial Kwantung Army—and, because of suspected Communist sympathies, the oppressed.

Like many socially critical film-makers, Kobayashi is obviously torn between the epic on the one hand and the journalistic on the

other: between the human and the tendentious. That he has opted for reportage, which has its own exacting standards, is not discreditable. That he has not entirely succeeded in reconciling his chosen path with a hankering after the human and the epic is also by no means discreditable. Atrocity indictments, after all, make pretty intractable cinema once they cross the boundary of the short and the newsreel. Their impact is too sore, too intolerable, too one-sidedly assertive; the sensibility is battered, not refined, the intellect barely connects. Absoluteness of scale struggles against particularisation of character, and the debate within one man runs the risk of being swallowed up by the far less debatable facts of the immediate horror around him. Because of this well-nigh insoluble problem, reflected here in the decision to emblematised the character of Kaji, these films are comparative failures. Failures, that is, by standards of human proportion and poetic response, and by no others: by the standards which judge *A Walk in the Sun* to be superior to *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and *The Burmese Harp* to be superior to either.

The action is straightforward and ironic. The time is 1943, war wages in Manchuria, every man is needed. In order to marry, Kaji goes after a reserved occupation, but a talented report on labour-management lands him a thankless job on the spot in a desolate slag-heap in Manchuria, to increase production in ore mines run by graft, starvation and the ill-treatment of enslaved Chinese. For all his pains and protests, Kaji achieves nothing (apart from the required 20% production increase) but escapes, executions, riot, the mistrust and hatred of those he has fought for and his own torture for liberal sympathies by the secret police. His call-up papers provide a final mockery, and the second film, *Road to Eternity*, pursues much the same simple, episodic pattern of barbaric upheaval against the relentless monotony of grey sky and barren, fantastically undulating landscape.

He trains, shoots well, his proficiency adding to the hell of a myopic little recruit who can do no right. His wife visits him, is allowed to spend the night with him, and there is a solitary scene of tentative poetry to soften the prevalent mood of prosaic horror when she stands obediently naked against the window-filtered dawn to give him a lasting memory of her. Then back to forced marches, the fumbled suicide in a lavatory of the obscenely harried little recruit, Kaji's accusation of murder against the worst of the bullies; a Communist friend escapes and is pursued into the marshes—one of those masterly set pieces ending in characteristic irony when Kaji fails to save the life of the man he has accused, trapped and sucked down into a mud-flat. A spell in a hospital ward ruled over by a crabbed and monstrous matron follows—here the tension falters, just as in *No Greater Love* the temperature is lowered by what may be excessive loyalty to the book, in the dwelling on the intrigues of the mine bosses. Then more brutality, with Kaji voluntarily sharing the indignities suffered by the men under him at the hands of the sergeants, not to mention his own torments at their hands. Again, one has the vaguest reservations about Kobayashi's taste; perhaps because one senses a parallel to the earlier film's torture scene, when the sight of Kaji braced across a chair or trussed like a chicken from the rafters and swung with batons strikes a sado-erotic chord uneasily reminiscent of stills from Japanese pornography. Finally, a vivid battle sequence, treated in distinctive panoramic style, with the camera moving across laterally from gigantic Russian tanks to puny Jap machine-gunners, both bedecked in leafy camouflage and looking for all the world like Birnam Wood come to Dunsinane.

But a film called *Road to Eternity*, made with fidelity (you can be sure) and precision, cannot stop there. The last third has yet to come. Furthermore the writers, Kobayashi himself and a second adapter, are not dealing with heroes and supermen; out of their story comes a question—what is to be learnt from all this? Nor can they shelve an answer by killing Kaji. Instead, he kills the soldier, a hysterical epileptic, who shares his foxhole and risks giving him away. The tanks pass on, he wanders over the deserted battlefield in search of non-existent survivors, and—in a last line as chill as that given to Camus's Caligula, "I am still alive!"—he confesses to the empty wastes: "I am a murderer, but I must go on living."

Here, and throughout, Kobayashi has justified the enormity of his two films with direction that is convincing (despite much mercifully stylised violence) and powerfully trenchant. The music is Westernised, but noble and sombre, the wide-screen camerawork would not disgrace the best of Milestone or John Ford, the acting is uniformly sound. But, if one is to apply the highest standards, the films must stand or fall by their portrait of Kaji. Is he brave, or obdurate, intelligent, or merely capable, a saint or a fool? These things remain obscure, a second viewing revealing no more than the



first, and though the character is played with a strangely Occidental beauty and unbowed conscience by Tatsuya Nakadai, we are left in ignorance of Kaji's standards outside the war framework. As a result there is little for the mind to linger on but a Dostoevskian formula—that of the Fool of Nature exemplified rather more aptly in *The Burmese Harp*, a poetic, epic film where these are evidently journalistic; and, of course, the facts of bravery, endurance, tyranny and war.

Yet these facts contain a rider, a last, major consideration which all but reconciles us to this lack of motive in the central character. By drawing (so we are told) on his own wartime experiences, Kobayashi has been able to comment at first hand on the entire Japanese system of slave labour and militarism: to demonstrate that its object, as elsewhere, was the breaking and remodelling of human personality. We see the little private, reduced by every form of cruelty and degradation to infantilism, robbed of everything but the choice of suicide; we see Kaji himself saved always at the eleventh hour because he is resilient, rebellious, with his own fund of violence and, consequently, "officer material"; and we learn by implication that in the Japanese hierarchy survival can only come through violence. The only value is power.

No normal, informed person enjoys seeing films about slave labour camps and the inhuman practices of war. There is an understandably general feeling about such films that their message, since it is obvious, is superfluous. Nevertheless they provide at their best a sober exemplar of the most extreme pressures which an organised militaristic society can produce. Though the facts of Kaji's pilgrimage may fail to fire the imagination as do the motives and experiences of Private Mizushima in *The Burmese Harp*, Kobayashi's lesson—that Kaji withstood these pressures as much by his practical ability and his latent violence as by his integrity—remains valid and deserving of a wide audience.

Whether it will get it is another matter. For one thing it is restricted for the moment to the Gala Film Clubs. For another it offers no easy solutions to one of the greatest horrors and dangers of our time. It is relevant and, in its bleak way, it is even optimistic. But nobody is likely to find it exactly exhilarating.

PETER JOHN DYER

## SUNRISE AT CAMPOBELLO

Dore Schary, whose fortunes might some day make a good subject for a Dore Schary film, left Hollywood four years ago in circumstances of failure and some suspicion. He had failed as production head of the largest movie company in the world, and he had openly supported the Democrats, who lost. He went to New York, where he wrote a play about F.D.R., which became a great hit, and now he is directing other Broadway hits and making his own films. After unsuccessfully attempting to catch the spirit of the times with an adaptation of *Miss Lonelyhearts*, he turned to his own portrait of Roosevelt, *Sunrise at Campobello* (Warner-Pathé), and brought it to the screen in a production so ardently faithful to the Metro traditions of the Forties that L. B. Mayer himself would have been proud to make it—proud, even while Schary's liberal attachments stampeded the G.O.P. mastodon in his breast. Of course, it is true that Mayer might have preferred Walter Pidgeon to Ralph Bellamy as Roosevelt and, as Eleanor, a Greer Garson not quite so long in the tooth, for the anachronistic flair of *Campobello* reaches beyond the glamorous Forties back to the era of Muni-Zola/Pasteur and the forthright biographical impersonation. Schary's scholarship is compelled by contemporaneity and by the Roosevelt buffs who will be counting the trees along the drive at Hyde Park and counting on Missy LeHand to call F.D.R. "Boss" or "Mr. R." and on F.D.R. to call Mrs. R. "Babs"—and so forth.

But it is also compelled by affection, and that makes the film easy to scoff at, as I have been doing, but hard to dislike, for it is not often one sees a Hollywood film which has received the full benefit of its maker's unfrustrated devotion. And if one's prejudices happen to coincide even remotely with Schary's—he is an out-and-out hero worshipper—*Campobello* can be a great deal of fun. It is not a thesis-film like *Wilson*, Darryl F. Zanuck's far more ambitious effort of 1944; it is a personal tribute to the man rather than to his works, and in an era which has grown accustomed to Presidential politics without issues, to bipartisanship as a patriotic imperative, none but the most fanatic Peglerian diehard can object to a film in which Roosevelt comes out for the League of Nations, the poor, and

the Boy Scouts, and against noblesse oblige and bad grammar. He is also for a Catholic for President, but this apparent bit of election year savvy is more properly understood as another in a long line of Brother Schary's sermons on Tolerance, going back to *Crossfire* and *The Boy with Green Hair*. *Campobello* is in fact a Schary product from beginning to end. It is serious, genteel, inspirational, honest, sentimental, faintly stuffy, cheerfully middlebrow. It is overwhelmingly decent in the sense in which Schary understands that word; and his understanding of it, together with the kind of responsibility it implies, is the vestigial hallmark of an earlier, prosperous and more relaxed Hollywood.

The fun of the film is that of leafing through an album of Rooseveltiana, full of replica models animate and inanimate and authentic-looking locations, from Campobello Island and the Bay of Fundy, in whose waters Roosevelt first felt the chill of paralysis, to Hyde Park, where he struggled toward recovery and away from the benevolent tyranny of his mother, and Madison Square Garden, where a short walk to the rostrum to nominate Al Smith restores him to public life. Schary's director, Vincent Donehue, was his associate on *Lonelyhearts* and the Theatre Guild production of *Campobello*. He has little film sense, and his direction combines with Schary's rather arch dialogue to suggest that the virtues of life in the Roosevelt household were somehow linked to a frighteningly high standard of elocution. The characters continually address each other like members of a forensic society, F.D.R. talks to his own young children in the manner of his celebrated fireside chats, and even the curt Louis Howe, as played by Hume Cronyn, is not above the kind of polysyllabic jocularity that writers like Mr. Schary use to lend "tone" to the proceedings. Greer Garson, an actress who has long confused acting with public speaking, imitates to discomforting perfection Eleanor's well-bred yodel ("You had bet-tah, get out of those—wet. Clothes, Frank-lin, bee-foah you catch. Cold."). But it is a brave performance, capturing a shyness and an awkwardness that are not without charm. The F.D.R. charm has virtually been enshrined by an act of Congress, but Bellamy does a good, if overly muscular, job on it. He lacks Roosevelt's leonine elegance, and his performance will be appreciated more by men than by women. The emphasis everywhere in the film is on physical veracity and, such as it is, can hardly be faulted. What is there to be copied was copied. What belongs to history, however, can rarely be recovered by art, and even if Dore Schary were Tolstoy, he would have had a hard time with F.D.R. "Beyond the screen," Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. writes, "the real Roosevelt existed in mystery, even to himself." Schary's theme is will-power, rather than the will-to-power. But it is only when some hint of the latter breaks through, as when Roosevelt, leaving Campobello as an invalid in 1921, waves to the reporters running beside his train, or—a ghostly scene—when he is wheeled down the ramp into the Garden, that the film touches its few moments of grandeur.

ARLENE CROCE



"Sunrise at Campobello": Ralph Bellamy and Greer Garson.



## SANCTUARY

**T**WENTIETH CENTURY-FOX seems reluctant to admit the possibility of defeat at the hands of William Faulkner. Jerry Wald's *The Long Hot Summer* and *The Sound and the Fury* could hardly be described as wild successes, either critically or commercially. Now the Zanucks, Darryl F. and his son Richard, have entered the field, taking on the intractable material of *Sanctuary* and engaging an English director, Tony Richardson, for this latest foray into Yoknapatawpha County.

*Sanctuary*, it will be remembered, tells the story of Temple Drake, the Southern society girl whose mildly drunken evening escapade ends in rape by a bootlegger, leading her to the back-room of a New Orleans brothel where she spends with him what are to be the most enjoyable, as well as the most meaningful, days of her life. The violence, the encounter between one corrupted world and another, may be regarded as containing Faulkner's comment on his society; though at thirty years' distance one thinks of *Sanctuary* mainly as the forerunner of a whole string of gleefully sensational imitations. Years later, at any rate, Faulkner returned to Temple Drake, to round off the story in *Requiem for a Nun*. Temple's marriage is a cold failure, haunted by memory and guilt; she is saved only when Nancy, the drug addict and ex-prostitute whom she has taken into her house as a servant, voluntarily assumes the burden of guilt through her murder of Temple's child. Nancy is one of Faulkner's unshakeable Negroes, rather like Lucas in *Intruder in the Dust* in her massive fortitude and resignation; and her act of symbolic absolution, the saving of Temple against her will, takes one into the area of Faulkner's almost mystical interpretation of relations between white and negro, where black strength buttresses white frailty, and the white conscience has to be shockingly awakened.

It is a territory into which Faulkner has made it increasingly difficult to follow him, as his own writing has become more clotted and opaque; and although one can imagine (just) that *Requiem for a Nun* may have made effective theatre, it is difficult to see how any screen version of the whole Temple Drake story could prove anything but abortive. One method would have been to lay on the atmospherics with a trowel, as Sidney Lumet did with Tennessee Williams' *The Fugitive Kind*, trusting that impressions of monolithic truths might dimly emerge through the familiar haze of the Deep South. But this is far from being the approach of the film. Tony Richardson has directed and James Poe has prosaically written. Everything here is treated on a level of almost matter of fact realism, from courtroom, to flashback, to the story of the murder, to Temple's final meeting with Nancy in the death cell. A succession of lurid incidents are presented for our inspection, strung together on a thread of dialogue. Even in that crucial final scene, the summing up of the relationship between Nancy and Temple, the dialogue—and a shot of black hands framing a white face—is still fumbling to make a point too tenuous and symbolic to be expressed in such naively plain words.

Easy as it is to sympathise with Tony Richardson, plunged into these Southern quicksands on his first Hollywood assignment, it becomes less easy to condone his errors of judgment. Cruelly, the film exposes those gaps in sheer craftsmanship which mattered so much less in the two John Osborne adaptations. The filming, all too often, is static, and the sense of fluidity, give and take, the dramatic interaction between people, is missing. Because of this lack of rhythm, scenes in which the emotional pressure builds up are made to stand out as isolated effects, moments unrelated to what has happened before or is going to happen next. The arrival at the bootleggers' hide-out, with its sniggering, unshaven guardians and tumbledown shanties, becomes too transparently a move into a studio set; the return of Candy, the gangster, supposedly killed six years earlier in his blazing car, appears profoundly unsurprising. Again and again, one senses the pull towards the stage, the suspension of the action in order to accent a movement or a speech in a way which gives the film an unexpected air of coldness and detachment. The father's response to his daughter's story, for instance, might possibly work in theatrical terms: here it comes across as unbelievably chilly, as though Temple were narrating her history to a blank wall.

This dramatic under-nourishment extends to the playing. Odetta, the Negress, with her striking voice and presence, has been encouraged to play the part on a single note of natural dignity; difficult enough to accept that this homely stoic is capable of anguish, it is impossible to visualise her as a drug addict and murderess. Yves Montand's Candy seems similarly remote: he exists as a character in a fantasy Temple has made up, an hallucinatory gangster, a man who can come back from the dead because

he never really lived. So one is thrown back on Temple herself, and on Lee Remick's brave efforts to cope with a heroine restricted to a series of impressions—gay Temple doing the Charleston, rich girl Temple snubbing the bootleggers, abandoned Temple trying on the tawdry finery Candy brings her, and sadder and wiser Temple growing up under the pressure of the tragedy forced on her by Nancy.

At a time when our young film-makers need our confidence and encouragement, it is sad to be able to write of *Sanctuary* in no happier terms; but it is a film which submerges the personality of its director, and, on reflection, one can scarcely imagine how it could possibly have been otherwise.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

## SO CLOSE TO LIFE

**S**O CLOSE TO LIFE (Contemporary) is a good film, but there is no point in reading too much into it. Of course everything Bergman does has some special significance in relation to the rest, but that is not to say that his films are all on the same level, either in achievement or—more importantly—in intention. *So Close to Life*, though its showing here has been held up for a year or two, was in fact made after *The Seventh Seal* and *Wild Strawberries* and before *The Face* and *Virgin Spring*; and in such company it is likely either to be approached with altogether too much reverence, and taken religiously as one of its director's major statements on Life and Death, or disappointedly and unfairly dismissed simply because it is not anything of the sort.

The relations between *So Close to Life* and Bergman's other films are mostly pretty obvious. After his "So Close to Death", *Wild Strawberries*, he has returned to the very beginning of life, to the months, in fact before birth, and shown us another group of waiting women: three mothers-to-be in a maternity ward at various stages of pregnancy. Stina's baby is overdue, and she wants it very much; Cecilia has a miscarriage and feels that her marriage is doomed; Hjortis has failed to dispose of an illegitimate child and is now resolved to keep it, come what may.

But this summary also suggests the level at which the film stands in Bergman's work. The script (adapted by Ulla Isaksson from her short story *The Friendly, The Dignified*) is admirable in its reticence and precision; any temptation to tie things up too easily is resisted—although in the last reel Hjortis makes the telephone call to her mother as we knew all along she would, and sets off happily for home with thirty shillings borrowed from kindly, understanding Sister Brita, Cecilia has only agreed, without much enthusiasm, to see her husband again and talk things over, and Stina still lies, dead to the world and locked in overwhelming grief for the death of her child at the moment of birth. We may guess that things will come right for them too, eventually, but we have to dot the i's and cross the t's for ourselves. In short, it calls for a little intelligence but not too much; it is the blueprint for a superior women's picture, but a "women's picture" nevertheless.

And this is precisely how Bergman has made it—as a superior women's picture. It is finely acted by all concerned, especially so in the case of the three principals, who are all invested by the actresses concerned (Eva Dahlbeck, particularly striking in Stina's final scenes of blank desolation, Ingrid Thulin and Bibi Andersson) with an individuality only hinted at in the script; and the direction is a model of tact and fidelity to the given text. Photographed almost entirely in close-up, the characters act and interact under the microscopic inspection of Bergman's probing and patient camera, which waits inexorably for them to make the one revealing gesture, produce the one tell-tale reaction, which will give us the key to their personalities, the clue to their attitudes at any particular moment. Not a shot is wasted, not an incident seems unnecessary (even the agonies undergone by Stina in the delivery room have their point—apart from it being necessary to the plot that she should suffer them, it is necessary that we should see her suffering them to appreciate the significance of her despairing and terrified cry "I never knew it would be like this"); and on its level this is one of Bergman's most satisfying films.

But on its level, which is not anywhere near that of *Smiles of a Summer Night* or *Wild Strawberries*. It is much closer in its aspirations to, say, *Waiting Women* or *Journey into Autumn* and in achievement it closely matches *Summer Interlude*—personal and accomplished, but inescapably minor. Perhaps it is because Bergman has never quite outgrown his almost neurotic preoccupation with the difficulties and horrors of childbirth (one thinks of the abortions





A three-way conversation, between the girl on the stage and her two screen images, in "Magic Lantern".

and miscarriages freely scattered through the earlier films). And it is significant that happy, uncomplicated motherhood is seen here only as an unattainable ideal—the babies Hjordis sees through a glass observation panel before a blind is peremptorily snapped down; the mothers feeding their babies in a ward Stina is destined never to reach. Death has come over the intervening years to have more significance for Bergman than that implied by the rather arbitrary suicides of *Port of Call* and *Thirst*. But birth, it seems, does not yet stir his deeper creative faculties; and consequently *So Close to Life* remains an example of the best one can fairly expect, but not, certainly, the most one can hope for.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

## In Brief

**MAGIC LANTERN** is an appropriate name for what is, when all is said and done, a delightful toy with about the same artistic range as the Victorian parlour delight. The novelty is to combine moving stages and live performers—singers, dancers and musicians—with film, projected on to a number of screens of varying shapes and sizes which materialise and vanish at different points about the stage. It was first seen at the Brussels Fair in 1958, opened in Prague a little later, and in Moscow a week or so before it arrived in London. The programme we are seeing here appears to be a selection of the best of the Brussels and Prague programmes, adapted to British tastes in association with Wendy Toye.

One's immediate, more sophisticated reactions against mere technical trickery are here rather disarmed by the ingenuity and precision involved, and by the intelligent exploitation of the restricted aesthetic possibilities. The principal fascination for its devisers (the chief of whom is Alfred Radok, who made *Old Man Motor-Car*) is evidently the dynamism that can for some reason or another be generated by counterpointing different kinds of movement in the theatre. Quite undistinguished choreography and fairly undistinguished moving picture images can be juxtaposed with explosive effect. "The Spartakiade", for instance, with a sport ballet going on in front of films of parading athletes, is irresistible.

The high spot of the evening at the Saville Theatre is an academically facetious history of the cinema (which is worth taking note of; it does justice to neglected European figures like the inventor Purkyne). It culminates in the simultaneous projection of an old slapstick farce, *The Lover in the Wardrobe*, and a film of Verdi's *Otello*. The two screens become rather confused, and (shuttling from one to the other in the farcical wardrobe) the Moor and Desdemona

get mixed up with the crazy trio from 1905. It ends with the three gentlemen on one screen pelting the two ladies on the other with assorted bric-à-brac. Not all the programme, it is only fair to say, comes up to this; but the strain of stretching one technical novelty to fill a whole variety bill is not too evident.

For the record, it is perhaps worth noting that colour film and live, balletic action were first combined in a *féerie* at the Châtelet in 1896; and the Crazy Gang were running off stage and on to screen in a revue somewhere in the late Thirties. *Plus ça change...*

DAVID ROBINSON

**THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN** (*United Artists*). With his known affection for the Western, Kurosawa seems more likely to be entertained than angered by the treatment Hollywood has given his *The Seven Samurai*. In fact, this is not the sort of remake which need irritate anyone: no sacrilege has been committed, no irreplaceable original destroyed, the credits give due acknowledgment to the source. The samurai have merely become gunfighters, under the slightly Central European command of Yul Brynner, and gunmen viewed with an unfailingly romantic eye. Tombstone and Dodge City are quiet; the West is settling down and these men are already becoming anachronisms. They know it—the film makes their melancholy rather over-articulate—and so they agree to take on an almost unpaid assignment, the defence of a poor Mexican village harried by bandits.

We first encounter Brynner and his aide, Steve McQueen, taking over as driver and shotgun guard of a hearse, to ensure that a Negro gets the lawful burial denied him by race prejudice. Up the street they slowly drive, exchanging laconic jokes and watching the windows for snipers; there's a confrontation at the hill-top cemetery, when the camera pulls back to emphasise isolation, the little township in its mist-blue Western hills; and then, tension relaxed, there's the fast canter back down the hill, the black plumes flying. The director, John Sturges, makes this the film's best sequence, as it is also the sharpest and most compact. The Mexican setting is a little hygienic, with the villagers in their laundered white shirts taking up statuesque poses all over the main square. And although both direction and script (by William Roberts) work to suggest relationships of suspicion and reluctant friendship between the farmers and their protectors, it's here that the film falls into Hollywood cliché. Charles Bronson, Robert Vaughn and James Coburn are all strong assets to Brynner's band; and they all die bravely in the final pitched battle, staggering and spinning in their death agonies in a way which again shows Sturges' liking for the elementary heroic image. The battle is a good Western fight,



though nothing to touch Kurosawa's original: one misses the sense of the topography of the place in this piecemeal skirmish in the dust. Comparisons, though, are unnecessary: this tough-sentimental eulogy to the gunfighter establishes itself as a likeable enough Western on its own traditional terms.—PENELOPE HOUSTON

**CAGED** (*Cross Channel*). After several partial failures, it was not surprising that Renato Castellani should turn, in 1958, to material with obvious market appeal. Suso Cecchi d'Amico's script for *Caged* (or *Nella Città l'Inferno*) was adapted from Isa Mari's stories of prison life and had the planned advantage of teaming two of Italy's top actresses in a story which gave them more or less equal opportunities. Apart from Anna Magnani and Giulietta Masina, the cast includes practically every female bit player in the Italian cinema, all busily at work as resigned old prisoners, protesting young prisoners, harried and victims.

Magnani's jaded old hag reigns supreme over all, bullying and supplicating in her familiar black slip, characteristically snatching at all the opportunities. Always assured and controlled in bravura outbursts, she is equally compelling in the quieter episodes, especially the long night scene with the trembling newcomer (Masina) when they reminisce on past experiences over a cup of improvised coffee. Magnani retains the quality of suddenly making a scene come alive with a laugh or a gesture (her shout of "Ciao Roma" during the prison movie show is such a moment), even though one may have seen her do it all before. Here is a broad, open expression of feeling which necessarily overshadows Masina's serviceable, though oversophisticated, contribution.

Castellani's view of his characters and their environment is plain and relatively unsensational. If *Caged* seems a far cry from his generous, youthful films of a few years ago, it retains the personality of a seasoned (perhaps hardened) film-maker. But the script's main social points—prison life corrupts as much as the outside world; certain prisoners need individual attention—are peremptorily stated; and there are too many episodes, like the sickly little romance between the young girl and the mechanic on the outside, which are simply time-fillers. What one does remember is Magnani's personal magnetism, her portrait of a woman soured by life and yet eager for it. The rest may be as predictable and sentimental as the next film (as, for instance, the Hollywood *Caged*); but this was worth doing.

JOHN GILLET



**THE FACTS OF LIFE** (*United Artists*) is unequivocally middle-aged, a comedy of small talk, unassertive jokes, satire so mild that it only just breaks the surface. In that American suburbia dominated by the country club and the parent-teacher association, Bob Hope and Lucille Ball raise their tiny standard of revolt, trying to conduct an affair which finally founders on the discovery that two divorces are an expensive business and that a wet afternoon in a convertible whose hood can't be raised puts an unendurable strain on the romantic spirit. As the game clearly requires innocence all round, with no suggestion that those Saturday evening encounters at the country club may in future be a little tense, the film cannot afford to get emotionally involved. Its air of rather nervous detachment—and the essence of artificial comedy is that it should be confident to the point of insolence—becomes a weakness, since it eventually throws everything back on the players. But the quiet jokes come off engagingly: Lucille Ball, playing gin rummy without her glasses and entirely unable to make out what cards she is holding; Bob Hope, driving down a nightmare road lined on either side with garish motel signs and trying glumly to remember which one he started out from; both of them, tentative conspirators, endeavouring to assure the sceptical motel proprietor that their name is really Washington. Years of *I Love Lucy* have not damped down Lucille Ball's astrigent vitality; she still has an air of being constantly surprised at herself, that suggestion of vulnerability which also marked Kay Kendall's comedy. Bob Hope has for some time seemed a victim of the automatic wisecrack, but *The Facts of Life* puts him back in charge of his jokes. The film's makers, Melvin Frank and Norman Panama, allow it to slip undemandingly along: a comedy thin-spun almost to breaking point, but buoyantly played and coolly written.—PENELOPE HOUSTON

WHEN AN ENGLISHMAN ABROAD seems to lose his impeccable good taste, he can still cause a stir, apparently. After the showing on television of Denis Mitchell's documentary **CHICAGO PORTRAIT**, the Mayor of that city, without having seen the film, described it as a "monstrosity" and several angry viewers telephoned the BBC and wrote to the papers about a realistic abattoir sequence (no-one ever thinks of switching off their sets, of course). What had the previously mild-mannered Mr. Mitchell, with his record of impressionistic, poetically-inclined portraits of early mornings in Northern cities and colourful nights in Soho, perpetrated? He showed us Chicago as a symbol of modern industrialism, hectic, harsh, and strident; and his cameras recorded street accidents, fights, skid-row drunks and sleazy joints. He also hinted, sometimes slyly, at the presence of culture, technology and the cosier aspects of American city life. For the first fifteen minutes or so, it seemed to work very well—here was a welcome anti-romantic approach, a good hard look at life. Then, gradually, one realised that something was missing. In crossing the Atlantic, Mr. Mitchell appeared to have substituted his earlier knowing eye for a more savage one. Comparisons with the picture of that name came instantly to mind, for what we saw was a tough, slick American job, with all the tricks and clichés of other big city films down to the obligatory montage of neon lights, the soft blues accompaniment and the freewheeling camerawork.

In his English films, Mr. Mitchell's talent for juxtaposing disconnected scenes with scraps of recorded extempore dialogue from the local inhabitants produced telling effects. Here, a similar technique stood little chance against an editing style almost wholly concerned with surface sleight-of-hand. This kind of brilliance soon defeats its own purpose: crafty joins on movement, shock cuts from faces to objects, make no sense unless there is some kind of emotional or intellectual continuity. In his search for the exotic and the picturesquely sordid, Mr. Mitchell seemed to draw away from reality into a fictional world of his own creation where no-one actually worked or thought, but was animated only by the cutter's scissors. Near the end, as the movements of the abattoir assistants were pointlessly cross-cut with the arm movements of a group of dancers, one was repelled more by its vulgarity than by its horror (I wonder how many of the BBC callers mentioned this!).

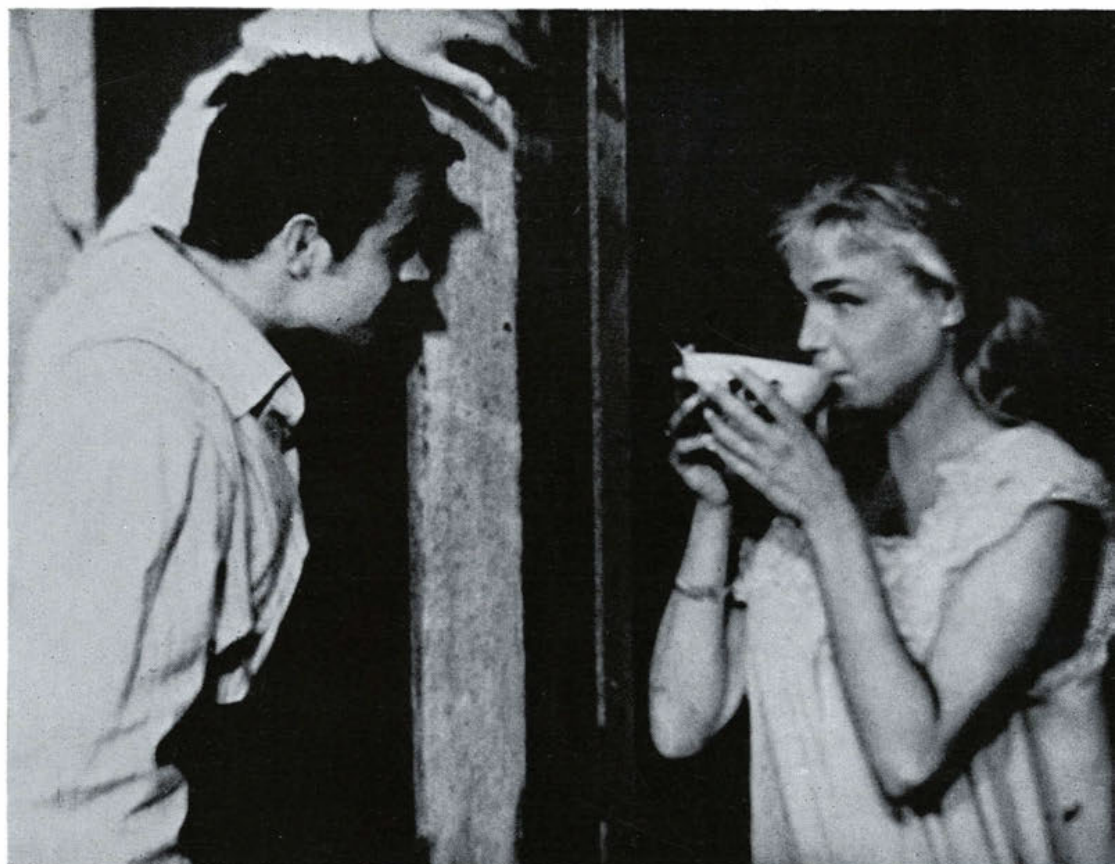
Mr. Mitchell sub-titled his study "first impressions"—should he decide to make a return journey one hopes his reporter's talent can be more sharply focused. The trouble with *Chicago* was that its journalistic viewpoint became too often clouded by the urge to communicate a kind of pseudo-art.—JOHN GILLET

"The Facts of Life": Bob Hope and Lucille Ball.



# SENSUALITY IN THE CINEMA

ERIC RHODE



A RECENT FASHION AMONGST publishers to bring out supposedly serious books on eroticism in the cinema seems to be growing, and often with amusing results. There is the curious case of Mme. Simone de Beauvoir, for instance, whose readers by now must be thoroughly bewildered. Seduced by the lurid cover of the Four Square edition of *The Second Sex* into expecting an exposure of the darkest secrets of a woman's life, they soon discovered this was nothing more than the sugar on a metaphysical pill which turned out to be very bitter indeed. The book was, in fact, a harsh existentialist tirade against the hardships suffered by women in our present society. Warned by this, and braced by the vigorous title of her latest essay, *Brigitte Bardot and the Lolita Syndrome*, into expecting another dose of metaphysics, they must have been surprised to find this slight but interesting study was nothing more than a pretext for some delightful photographs of Mlle. Bardot lying around on beaches and beds. As both books were presented with deadpan gravity, one wonders at their reception. French wit baffles us still.

Though Mme. de Beauvoir's essay is more awe-inspiring than impressive, it is certainly a cut above other efforts in this line. One would happily accept Ove Brusendorff and Poul Henningsen's bland arguments against all censorship in their *Erotica for the Millions* (subtitle: *Love in the Movies*) if they had taken into account the possible degradation involved in a continual and uninhibited eroticism. In a sense they are right: to conceal the unnatural is unhealthy. But their definition of eroticism—as it is all too clearly seen in the stills in this book—is as unhealthy as any censorship and just as incompatible with any sense of human dignity. I can't see who will want to buy this pretentious, badly printed book. On the other hand, the frank pornography of Lo Duca's two volume *L'Erotisme au Cinéma* is sure to find many admirers. The graphs and formulae for sexual attraction take up little space and can easily be ignored. The photographs are plentiful and well printed. Though I wonder who can afford six pounds for two such slender volumes?

Though apparently dull, these books are not totally uninteresting, for they bring out with great vividness an obvious but often neglected point: that although film-makers, for obvious reasons, are obsessed with the erotic, they have seldom made films which can be called sensual. *Ossessione*, *Casque d'Or*, *Que Viva Mexico!*, *Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*, and one or two more: it's a surprisingly short list when one comes to think about it. What is a sensual film? One in which the director has primarily created the world through his senses—almost through his fingertips, as it were—so that there is a sensual relationship between the characters and their environment. Think of the moment in *Casque d'Or* when Manda and Marie wake one morning in their country retreat. Manda (Serge Reggiani) looks at Marie (Simone Signoret) as she sleeps, at her face coarse and ugly in the dawn light. He steps outside the house, and the earth is solid beneath him. The warm sun accentuates the shape of trees and grass, so that they are like living presences about him. An old woman feeds pigs which snuffle through drying mud. As the camera explores the multitudinous qualities of this world, one begins to feel it in all its solidity. Then Signoret appears at the window. He carries over to her a large bowl of coffee. She drinks and—the world being so firmly established around her—we drink it with her. Her face is transformed by the morning. She looks up at her lover and smiles, and as she looks up at him we are conscious of her long and beautiful neck. Her presence here is both desirable and dignified, erotic and yet not shameful. This is not only because her performance is a fine one, but because she is seen in a meaningful relationship to the world about her.

The failure of the erotic in the cinema arises then through the dissociation of people from the objects about them. As much as objects are made real by the uses people put them to, so people, in a film, are made credible by the way they use objects. Mme. de Beauvoir makes this clear when she says

Above: Serge Reggiani and Simone Signoret in "Casque d'Or".



that: "individuals are not defined only by sexuality. Each has a history, and his or her eroticism is involved in the situation." She accounts for Vadim's failure in directing Bardot by claiming that he "de-situates sexuality, and the spectators become *voyeurs* because they are unable to project themselves on to the screen . . . In Vadim's films the world is absent." Bardot, she goes on to say, is only made attractive in this kind of film because she fulfils a *Lolita* fantasy.

There is some truth in this, and one can infer from it that the success of eroticism in films lies mainly in their fulfilling a fantasy which, being non-sensual, is primarily cerebral. Bodies are dehumanised, turned into things on the level of over-stuffed sofas or new Cadillacs, as much conditioned by fashion as most other consumer goods. Around these things the spectator weaves his own fantasies, which remain of course inadequate. Aware of the thinness of their eroticism, and aware of a lack of response in their audiences—who are more unsatisfied than jaded—film-makers tend to strain for effects, piling on perversions like sadism and fetishism. A vicious cycle is set up, for however strident the eroticism may become, the spectator still remains unsatisfied. The pathetic



attempt to deploy psycho-analytic knowledge in these scenes can never be an effective substitute, since the felt world cannot be reconstructed by cerebral methods.

It is an extraordinary situation, and one wonders how it came about. Why are there so few sensual films? Historical factors come into play here which Mme. de Beauvoir ignores, perhaps wisely since they are many and complex. For artists of the Renaissance the situation was different: the erotic was naturally conceived through the sensual. Why has it since been intellectualised? As so often, the popular scapegoat is Puritanism. The Puritans, it is said, repressed the senses by condemning them; but this, in the main, is not true. Though the Puritans may have been aware of the dangers of the senses they never denied their force. The love play of Milton's Adam and Eve remains a model of sensual writing. If Puritanism, then, isn't responsible for the loss of the sensual, what is? Primarily, I suppose, the Copernican revolution. Man, no longer finding himself at the centre of the universe, became uncertain of his place in the world. He was no longer sure he could dominate or interpret it. With the industrial

revolution the situation was exaggerated. The sensual is inextricably bound up with the question of what is the human, or how can man fulfil himself in the world. But man was now alienated, by the conditions he worked in, by the monstrous cities around him, from any form of meaningful life. The sensual was lost; and the nineteenth century attempt to compensate for it—in the search for Nature—was as off the mark as our present eroticism. One sees this most clearly in the urban phenomenon of impressionism. The Sunday painters left the cities and tried to find an answer to their problem in trees and lakes. The word "impressionism" suggests how far the sensual was lost. In time impressionism was supplanted by cubism, and the disintegration of the world and the dehumanisation of man was complete.

Perhaps this failure plays only a peripheral part in the history of the cinema; perhaps it only blinds us to what was lost from the start. But even without this loss, the cinema started with a crippling disadvantage. The photograph is an inadequate way to interpret reality; between the artist and the objects he interprets, the machine imposes a serious limitation. Because of this, photography can never be more than an art of a secondary order. In a sense the cinema is saved from the arbitrary reductions of the camera by lighting, montage and movement. Yet in comparison with the possibilities of painting and sculpture these techniques are inadequate; and there is a continual pressure in the cinema (if it is to be an art) towards narrative and statement—towards literature, in fact. The cinema comments on the world rather than explores it,





unlike the sensual arts of the Renaissance which managed to synthesise both these activities.

Eisenstein, who studied Renaissance painting and who must have been aware of this problem, evolved a technique of montage which, by cutting back again and again to objects and emphasising their differing functions, created a sensual world. For instance, the cup of poison in the first part of *Ivan the Terrible* is a sculpted, created object, shot from every angle and seen in numerous relationships to the various characters. Eisenstein's technique of building up the reality of objects leaves us with the sense of having been involved in a three dimensional world, however formalised and personal it may have been. But this technique is too elaborate to be more generally useful, and other directors have rightly concentrated on their more valuable asset of movement. Yet if one thinks of Satyajit Ray's trilogy, or of *The Burmese Harp*, with its slow cross fades and its scenes more like frescoes than sequences, one sees that movement cuts across the creation of the sensual. It is an amusing and unnoticed paradox of the cinema that the more the erotic is jazzed up with pace and movement, the more the chance is that the sensual will be lost.

Occasionally a director will use the loss of the sensual to good effect. In Buñuel's films, objects become emblems. A skinned rabbit or a mutilated body will be so disinfected of



associations that it becomes a beautiful structure. Buñuel's work in many ways remains surrealist, and Sartre's remark on André Breton could still apply to him: "What interests him is not raw desire but crystallised desire, what may be called, to borrow an expression from Jaspers, the emblem of desire in the world." Buñuel's intelligence and technique are admirable, but, like surrealism and the other dehumanising movements, his art is a sick one. His technique becomes more significant in a more humane artist like Alain Resnais. The emblemising of Auschwitz in *Nuit et Brouillard*, so that ruins and instruments of torture become elegant artifacts, heightens our sense of the inhumanity of the past horrors of this place.

Even in the few sensual films made so far, one could equivocate about the nature of their sensuality. Most of them try to create a golden world, the pagan pastoral world of the Renaissance; and it is doubtful whether in doing so they are trying to escape from the modern world or trying to criticise it. There is an unsatisfactory ambiguity about Eisenstein's search for a lost Mexico, Ophüls' evocation of the Nineties, or Jean Renoir's return to his father's house. Only in Eisenstein's case is it fairly certain that he was not primarily motivated by nostalgia.

Yet this doesn't diminish the importance of sensuality in the cinema; for the sensual film, at its best, confronts the world and its problems and forces us into awareness of them. As



much as the only way to arouse joy is to create sensuously the pleasures and fulfilments of others, so it is only by making us feel their pain and tears, the very sweat on their brows, that the film can arouse indignation. Cerebral eroticism is no alternative. It evades the world and consequently is self-indulgent. This becomes clear when one notes how the sensuality of *Osessione* becomes the eroticism of *Rocco*; and Visconti's failing powers could almost be marked out in these terms.

Can this situation be reversed? Visitors to Henry Moore's recent exhibition at the Whitechapel Galleries might answer yes. In Moore's best work there is an admirable synthesis between post-cubist art and a sensuality which embodies man's dignity. But Moore is a sculptor, and it might be questioned whether his achievement can be applied to another medium. Yet something must be done. Henry James once said that he wanted to create a "seen art" rather than a "felt" one. Film-makers are recommended to reverse this voyeuristic formula if they want to keep the cinema alive. Certainly the eroticism celebrated in the books of Lo Duca and Brusendorff is a form of death.

*Brigitte Bardot and the Lolita Syndrome* is published by André Deutsch and Weidenfeld and Nicolson (10s. 6d.). *Erotica for the Millions* (50s.) and *L'Érotisme au Cinéma*, Volumes I and II (60s. each) are distributed in Britain by Rodney Book Service.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

**Far left:** Miss Jayne Mansfield—Midnight Franklin in *Too Hot to Handle*. "The attitudes, gestures and movements of the human body are laughable in exact proportion as that body reminds us of a mere machine."—Henri Bergson.

**Left, above:** "Bodies are dehumanised... as much conditioned by fashion as most other consumer goods." The striptease sequence in *La Dolce Vita* looks a little like a fashion photograph—we being offended the girl or the fur?

**Left, below:** "The sensual was lost". Compensation through mock-classical decoration: the nymph, the pool, the naked statue—Edwige Feuillère (right) in Abel Gance's *Lucrece Borgia* (1937).

**This page, left:** *Le Chien Andalou*: one of Buñuel's most striking characteristics is his use of disinfected objects. The papier mâché images of *Le Chien Andalou* become, in his later films, glittering emblems, representing rather than embodying sensuality.

**Above:** *Que Viva Mexico*: Sensuality and death are inextricably linked: the world of the senses is defined by death; and only death can give it meaning. Eisenstein forcibly points this in the death of the peons. The earth, from which the love of Maria and Sebastian once rose like the harvest, now devours them.



# PAY TELEVISION

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DUNCAN CROW

**R**EPUTE HAS IT THAT THE Pilkington Committee on Broadcasting, having declared itself ready to receive representations, was inundated by the views, grouses, complaints, suggestions and requests of a motley host to an extent equivalent to some 150 full-length novels. No doubt, like novels, some will be more worth reading than others. What is certain is that among the deluge are the gamuts of opinion on several really major questions. One of these, which the Committee is having to consider and on which it will have to make recommendations, is whether or not we should be allowed to have Pay TV in Britain. The recommendations on this point, and the Government's decisions resulting from them, are going to have an important effect on the distribution of entertainment—and information.

Because there is still some confusion about what Pay TV is and what it does, perhaps one ought to start with a definition. The essence of Pay TV is that only those who pay the required amount can see the programme that is being transmitted. It has nothing to do with the hiring or purchase of a television set by paying for the ordinary BBC or ITV programmes. Pay TV is concerned only with special programmes specially transmitted.

It is easy enough to write "only those who pay can see the programme," but it is not so easy to achieve in practice. A Pay TV system is not the sort of thing that anyone can rustle up overnight. Indeed, something like ten years of research and development have gone into arriving at "the present state of the art"—an art which is now functioning commercially.

There are, as far as I know, only three systems of Pay TV, of which one is at present in abeyance. Of the other two, the one with which I am acquainted is Telemeter; and in this system payment for the special programmes is made by putting coins into a small meter attached to the television set. There are, in fact, two Telemeter systems, one a relay system transmitting programmes by wire, the other a broadcast system, transmitting over the air. Telemeter by wire can provide three simultaneous programmes on the one cable, while Telemeter over the air provides one programme on each air channel reserved for it. In both cases mechanical and electronic devices are used, so that not until the "admission" price has been paid does the programme become visible and audible on the subscriber's screen.

At the receiving end these devices are housed in a small unit which can be easily attached to the outside of any standard television set and is connected to the terminals of the aerial lead. From this it can be appreciated that the Telemeter systems, both air and wire, are supplementary to existing services—supplementary in the sense that the

attachment of the unit does not prevent the set from continuing to receive free, or rather licence, TV programmes. A switch on the unit is simply turned to the Telemeter position and then the channel selector is tuned to the appropriate channel. The viewer pays only for those programmes he wants to see—there is no all-in, take-it-or-leave-it charge. In fact, Telemeter provides a box-office in the home which can be used with the same freedom of choice as one uses a cinema or theatre box-office.

Both the cable and broadcast units have certain characteristics in common. The first is that programmes are purchased by the viewer for cash, avoiding both the administrative arrangements necessary for running a credit system and the psychological problems involved in collecting payment for an entertainment after it is over. The American unit takes U.S. and Canadian 5c, 10c, 25c and 50c coins; the British version takes sixpences, shillings, florins and half-crowns. Any overpayment is recorded on the meter and goes towards purchasing the next programme.

The second characteristic is variety of price for different programmes. In Toronto, where the wire system is operating commercially, prices can range from free up to \$2 in 5 cent stages; the British unit allows a range of prices in multiples of sixpence. Electronic signals are sent out from the control studio setting the units for the various prices. This means that you can have one price for an opera, for example, another for a sporting event, another for a feature film, and another again for a programme which is part of some formal educational series; or you can have a free programme—possibly some public service transmission of regional interest.

Another operating characteristic is the recording of every programme "sale". A magnetic tape in the unit automatically records which programmes are watched and for how long. Not only does this give reliable information about public reactions, but it provides essential statistics about those programmes transmitted on a rental agreement, as films are rented to cinemas. This programme recorder is built into the cash drawer assembly, the cash drawers being periodically collected and taken to a central office where the money is counted and the recordings read.

Security in the wire system is obtained in two ways. First, the signals are sent by coaxial cable; and second, they are sent at frequencies below the range which an ordinary television set can receive. When enough coins have been inserted to pay for a particular programme, the unit converts the incoming signals to a suitable channel. In the air system security is achieved by scrambling the sound and vision signals and restoring them immediately the programme price is paid. Vision is scrambled by transmitting insufficient synchronising information, or rather by making insufficient synchronising information available until enough coins have been put into the unit. The sound heard when you first tune to a Pay TV channel is the programme information; when the money is paid this is suppressed and the authentic programme sound is substituted.

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This description of Telemeter's essentials should prove the point that an effective Pay TV system needs time, money and ingenuity for its successful development. Telemeter is in fact the product of some ten years and several million dollars worth of work by a division of Paramount Pictures.

Sometimes in discussions about Pay TV one hears the bleat of Bartlesville. This is a town in north-west Oklahoma where, in 1957, a project was started for "piping" films into homes. A wire was stuck in the back of the television set, there was a flat monthly fee of \$9.50 which had to be paid whether you viewed the programmes or not, and these programmes were an unvarying diet of films. The Bartlesville experiment was a flop, and its failure has been quoted from time to time as an awful warning. But Bartlesville was not Pay TV. The viewer had to meet his monthly bill even if he never turned



his set on, while a true Pay TV system gives the viewer a choice of spending his money or not. Bartlesville is a sad case history in the saga of entertainment; but it has no relevance to the present issue.

Much more to the point is Toronto. Here, in the suburb of Etobicoke, Pay TV began its real commercial history on February 26th, 1960, when a cable-Telemeter service was started. Within a few months there were 6,000 subscribers and the initial production run of units had been exhausted. Subscribers paid \$5 for the installation of the unit, and by all accounts Toronto is proving to be a great success. Even though there are six free channels to choose from, Telemeter still collects a sizeable nightly audience. A noteworthy point is that the system allows the transmission of colour films in colour.

At the present time, broadcast Pay TV, which is perhaps the real test, is not yet operating commercially. However, within recent months important advances have been made in this direction. In December 1960, the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (which has similar authority in these matters to H.M. Postmaster-General) authorised the International Telemeter Company to carry out rigorous field tests of its broadcast system in Los Angeles. These tests, which are still in progress, are reported to have had excellent results. The other Pay TV system—Zenith's Phonevision—is also trying out its broadcast method at Hartford, Connecticut.

Perhaps the main thing to be said in making a case for Pay TV is that it is not its purpose—as some cynics have

inferred—to make viewers pay for programmes which they are now getting free. Obviously it isn't: if it transmits the same as the free channels it won't last long. Its purpose is to make available to viewers programmes which they cannot get, nor are ever likely to get in sufficient volume on free TV, because of the operational characteristics of the medium. Thus a function of Pay TV is to cater for minority interests, or rather for those interests which, though minor when compared with the great swathe cut by free TV, are nevertheless substantial when carefully garnered. Pay TV might be likened to a country bus: it provides an essential public service, yet it provides it in a more individual way than the motorway coaches of free TV. It can afford to, indeed it will have to, seek out its audience.

The call for Pay TV has been increasing. British film producers are in favour of it, so are the renters. Exhibitors appear to have mixed feelings, though important groups in the film industry are supporting it. Equity has come out in favour. From the point of view of the arts as a whole this expansion of the box-office, or extension of the auditorium, can only be beneficial.

It is difficult to see what case there can be for Government opposition to Pay TV. The Government can determine the conditions under which it should be allowed to operate; and provided that these conditions are not such as to preclude viability, thereafter it is up to the interested companies to prove their point. It is their money they are prepared to venture in bringing about this revolution in the distribution of entertainment and information—not the public's.

## BOOK REVIEWS

**LA GRANDE AVENTURE DU CINÉMA SUÉDOIS**, by Jean Béranger. Illustrated. (Eric Losfeld, Le Terrain Vague, Paris.)

**FOUR SCREENPLAYS OF INGMAR BERGMAN**, translated by Lars Malström and David Kushner. Illustrated. (Secker and Warburg, 42s.)

**THE VIRGIN SPRING**, by Ulla Isaksson. Illustrated. (Ballantine Books, 3s. 6d.)

THOUGH OF COURSE THEY are not really at all alike, there are odd points of contact between the British cinema and the Swedish. Both nations are supposed, one way and another, to be fairly sober and stolid (even if this is sometimes only a front for neurosis), good at teamwork and keeping themselves to themselves; and in both cases the native film critics like to see the main virtues of the home product as lying in cooperation and a happy working of the team spirit. And in both cases the critics are always being proved wrong—as, one is inclined to add, they inevitably must be.

In Sweden, as in Britain and anywhere else, the masterpieces come from eccentric individuals; and in Sweden, for some reason, such individuals are not only few (which is to be expected) but they are surprisingly easy to distinguish. For, despite the valiant efforts of Jean Béranger in his new book to make the whole course of Swedish cinema sound grand and adventurous, the first five remain obstinately first, and the rest nowhere. We slog dutifully with him through lengthy plot summaries of practically every film of the slightest conceivable interest ever made in Sweden; we are offered filmographies of most of the *petit maitres* (and even of Swedish

stars in Hollywood) as well as the undeniable greats; and just about everything which can possibly be said about the films in question is said. But even after all this effort we remain disappointingly unexcited at the thought of exploring the less familiar works of Molander, Mattson, Edgren, Ekman *et al.*

In fairness to M. Béranger, it must be said that his tendency to seem uncritical is partly the result of compression, since criticism is clearly incidental to his main purpose. His book is a documented history and as such seems virtually impeccable; for anyone in search of any reasonable information on the Swedish cinema it will be the obvious, and often the only, reliable source. But he does write with the self-confessed bias of an extreme enthusiast; and therefore when he extends his critical comment on a film beyond one or two characterising epithets (something which happens frequently only towards the end of the book) he needs watching.

For one thing, he is prone to that favourite French intellectual parlour game which involves tracing delusory parallels and influences within one art as though it existed in a vacuum shut off from any other art and from life itself. But does it, in practice, really help very much to have the sin-in-a-valley, expiation-on-a-mountain-top theme pursued from Sjöström's *The Outlaw and His Wife* through the work of half a dozen directors who in most cases can hardly have heard of the film, let alone seen it, or to follow through the idea of a moving wood from Sjöström's *Vem Dömer to Welles's Macbeth*, with only the most grudging admission that Welles may have found a hint of it in his original text as well? The futility of this approach as a critical method can be seen from the fact that by far the strangest and most striking parallel—the way in which both Ingmar in *Karin Ingmarsdotter* and Il Matto in *La Strada* notice on the point of death that their watches have been broken—is certainly the most completely coincidental: unless, of course, Fellini has read Selma Lagerlöf's novel *Jerusalem*, the origin of the Sjöström film, which would introduce an entirely new consideration into the game.

Even more damaging than this passion for irrelevant displays of film erudition (and another characteristically French tendency, that of endowing all Englishmen with titles—hence, no doubt, "Sir Cecil Beaton, photographe attitré de la Cour d'Angleterre") is M. Béranger's determination to find signal virtues in practically every film he sees. Finally one rebels, for if *The Woman Without a Face* is really Molander at his best, whatever can the second-best be like? And if *The Girl with the Hyacinths* is really Ekman's masterpiece, surely the claims M. Béranger makes for him elsewhere in the book are just a little exaggerated?



No, back inevitably we come to Stiller and Sjöström, Bergman and Sjöberg, and Sucksdorff, plus *En Natt*, *Midvinterblot* and one or two other sports (one would particularly like to see *I Rök och Dans*, a sort of Swedish equivalent to *Hellzapoppin* with what sounds like a splendid parody of the great Swedish peasant drama). M. Béranger obviously considers these five directors the most interesting, but he does not really give us any idea of what it is that distinguishes them so unmistakably from the rest. He is highly readable—he could hardly help it—on the personal eccentricities of Stiller (he seems, incidentally, unaware of Louise Brooks's convincing arguments against the official view that Garbo was taken on by M-G-M to get Stiller, rather than *vice versa*), but fails to produce a coherent picture of that enigmatic figure Sjöström, and does not begin to consider whether Sjöberg is really a creator or just a superlatively gifted technician.

Most disappointing of all, he is content to summarise plots and refer us to his earlier book on Bergman for criticism of that director's controversial *oeuvre*. This is disappointing not because too little has been written about Bergman already—his most avid partisan could hardly maintain that—but because just at this time, when the Bergman frenzy of the last two years has sated us with early and inferior work and a violent critical reaction seems to be setting in, it would be useful to have a balanced critical reappraisal from someone so well-equipped to give it, now that the first evangelical urge is no longer present, as M. Béranger.

Meanwhile, however, we do have some first-hand material to go on, in the shape of the four screenplays given V.I.P. treatment in the luxurious Anglo-American volume from Secker and Warburg, and the one further script adapted by the same translators for an American paperback. None of them is at all informative technically: as published they consist of the complete dialogues from the finished films interspersed with an elaborate prose narrative—presumably written by Bergman himself, or by Ulla Isaksson in the case of *The Virgin Spring*, though this is not made clear—which gives a general description of the action but offers virtually no indication of how in detail the scripts have been realised.

And how does Bergman survive this renewed scrutiny? Surprisingly well on the whole. Though *The Face* seems almost as hollow and pretentious in print as it did on the screen, the other films (*Smiles of a Summer Night*, *The Seventh Seal*, *Wild Strawberries* and *The Virgin Spring*) retain all their hold on the imagination, returning to one's inner eye almost shot by shot as one reads.

Two new thoughts emerge, however, from thus studying the texts in isolation. One (to stick one's neck out after castigating M. Béranger for his parallels) is the remarkable likeness between Bergman the writer and Jacques Prévert. So many things are held in common—a somewhat Manichean view of the human condition; a preoccupation with angels and devils; a lasting fascination with the world of entertainment and its illusions; an occasional release (or is it?) from the grim fatalities of drama to the lighter fatalities of

farce—that one starts trying to draw up a series of correspondences. How do Bergman's comedies compare with Prévert's: *A Lesson in Love* and *Smiles of a Summer Night* with *Drôle de Drame* or *L'Affaire est dans le Sac*, which have something of the same feeling that a tragic world lies just out of frame? Can the use of the Middle Ages as a setting for a quasi-allegorical morality, so freely defined that it can mean anything or nothing, in *Les Visiteurs du Soir* and *The Seventh Seal* be aligned? Or how about the intricate balances of truth and falsehood in and around the lives of artists and show people in *Les Enfants du Paradis*, *Lumière d'Été* and *Les Amants de Vérone* on the one hand, *Prison*, *The Face*, *Sawdust and Tinsel* or even that masterpiece of tragi-comic ambiguity *Smiles of a Summer Night* on the other? Perhaps the further we try to define these correspondences, the more tenuous they become; but as far as they hold good they do have the advantage of placing each artist in a suggestive new context and heightening our critical awareness of both what is common and what is unique in their work.

The other thing which emerges is the extraordinary finesse and discrimination Bergman brings, purely as a director, to his treatment of the text before him. Of course this might be expected when he is working from his own scripts—after all, one supposes that in effect he directs as he writes, and writes always with the finished film, not the script as a literary end in itself, in mind—but it is equally noticeable in his handling of *The Virgin Spring*, whose script, whatever technical assistance Bergman may have given, is credited entirely to Ulla Isaksson. It is filmed with an absolute certainty and rightness which forbids one to consider the possibility of any other interpretation. Only in *Smiles of a Summer Night*, in fact, does such a possibility occur to one; but there it has instantly to be dismissed on the potent consideration that any alternative way of directing it one can devise weakens the script by playing safe, making it more obviously coherent but also more conventional, while Bergman's own superbly unpredictable and even, on the face of it, positively perverse handling has produced what is arguably his most personal and compelling film.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

**ERIC VON STROHEIM**, by Bob Bergut. Illustrated. (Le Terrain Vague, Paris. Distributed in Britain by Rodney Book Service, 30s.)

SET AGAINST PETER NOBLE'S *Hollywood Scapegoat*, this new biography has one great advantage. Bob Bergut went to chat with Stroheim, rather than formally to interview him, and has made a very real effort to give an account of this complex personality. He had the luck to find Stroheim in an amenable mood, since the master sensed that this young author was really eager to write about him, was held by his subject and not merely anxious to write a book. The knowing superficialities of *Hollywood Scapegoat* suggest chapters dashed off effortlessly and at speed. And Stroheim, like all men who have been deeply wounded, was very susceptible to anything written about him. He was always highly critical of Noble's book, on the grounds that he only approached him in writing, for information for an article which later became a book, instead of going to see him in person.

Bergut, on the other hand, made several journeys to Maurepas, that strange villa whose nineteenth-century ornamentation reminded one of the hunting lodge in *Honeymoon*. He set out to understand; and you sense that he really admires Stroheim. It doesn't much matter that he sometimes allowed Stroheim to bamboozle him, since this happened to everyone who surrendered to his charm. Stroheim liked playing with an audience and juggling enigmatically with certain incidents of his life; he enjoyed creating his own living legend, playing the role of the tough cynic. Henri Langlois (*Hommage à Eric von Stroheim*, in *Cinéma 57*) appreciated the extreme kindness and generosity of his private personality as Bergut has not always done. But this young writer took conscientious note of everything Stroheim told him, and the result is a kind of freshness and immediacy, an authenticity which makes his book rather engaging.

Bergut does not go in much for the brand of philosophical or sophistical theorising which a certain ultra-highbrow clan of critics has applied to Hitchcock, nor for film jargon only comprehensible to the initiated. (This kind of writing, incidentally, has recently infuriated Fritz Lang, who is shocked by their claims that his work reaches its height in *Le Tigre d'Echnapour* and that, by comparison, a film like *M* is of negligible importance.) Bergut's book avoids such



"Smiles of a Summer Night": Eva Dahlbeck and Gunnar Björnstrand.



egotistical theorising, which puts into a film-maker's mouth ideas foreign to his thinking. Some of his assertions, however, have been insufficiently checked, even though he submitted his text to Denise Vernac, Stroheim's admirable and indefatigable companion for many years, and has been honest enough to indicate through footnotes the points at which she disagreed with him.

Basically, though, there is only one ideal solution: a book on Stroheim written by Denise Vernac with Thomas Quinn Curtiss, the American film connoisseur with the astonishing memory and subtle psychological understanding. Better still would be a book which brought in a third collaborator in Herman G. Weinberg, who divides his devotion between Stroheim and Sternberg and is almost a walking dictionary to the cinema. Bergut's knowledge of languages seems limited, but it is curious that he cites none of Weinberg's articles and appears unaware of the Stroheim filmography which he prepared for the British Film Institute Index series. Bergut had to wait three years before finding a publisher for his text. He might have made his book more complete if he had given some of this time to reading the material recently published about Stroheim.

He does not apparently know, for instance, of the shooting script of *Greed*, published through the Belgian Cinémathèque, nor the useful special number of *Bianco e Nero* (February/March, 1959). And, in cases where he could not get information directly from Stroheim, he can be criticised for using tired second-hand sources. The seven page bibliography provided by *Bianco e Nero* might have yielded more information than the books he has relied on, seemingly chosen mainly because they are available in French.

There are numerous ways of writing about a film-maker, or about a director seen through his work. Bergut has chosen what is probably the easiest, concentrating on the man himself so that the films appear as parentheses in his biography. Certainly there's a great temptation to write about Stroheim, the man of a thousand trades and the adventurous destiny. The tumultuous, eager career, the thirst for naturalistic truth, the demand for the real, the obstinacy in the face of compromise and the incorruptibility in the face of everyone and everything—all these things go together to make up a kind of romantic realism which was basic to Stroheim's work. But this is not enough. Stroheim did not—as Oscar Wilde joked about himself—put all his talents into his life. His works speak, they even cry out; and they need more discussion than a mere annotation of incidents.

Perhaps it is simpler to write of a film-maker one has not known, to remain detached from personal impressions so that one can sound out the work itself. In preparing my own book on Murnau, for instance, I was able to consult a number of his former collaborators. But I preferred, before asking about his personality, to inquire into his working methods so that I could get confirmation for my own stylistic analyses. Here the writer contents himself largely with reporting the contents of the films; and even the chapter in which he tries to come to terms with "the myth, the style and the place of Stroheim" consists largely of generalisation.

He does not appear to have profited greatly by the chance to see and re-see Stroheim's films at the Cinémathèque Française, where they are included in the repertoire of classics, although he invites his readers to do so. His major shortcoming, though, is that he seems to lack a visual memory, without which no one ought to write books about the cinema. The scenes he quotes, for instance, are ones we have seen described many times. And in relating the action he is guilty of errors, such as his statement that in *Foolish Wives* the ambassador arrives in time to save his wife from the fire, whereas she is in fact rescued by the firemen before the ambassador gets there. He describes the famous scene in which Stroheim moistens his fingers in a bowl in order to make the credulous maid believe he is crying, but omits to point out that the bowl had been used for his manicure, which gives the sequence a sharper cutting edge. And in writing of *Honeymoon* he forgets that Mitzi collapses at the altar before saying her "I will" to Schani, with the result that they are not in fact married. It would be pedantic to detail the errors of names and facts which indicate the writer's limited knowledge of the cinema. He always speaks of *Devil Passkey* instead of *Devil's Passkey*, of Laemle instead of Laemmle, of Iris Barry as though she were a man and of Irving Thalberg as though he were a director. And there are other solecisms: the spelling of the poet Wildgans as Widgans could be a misprint, but when he writes of "the secondary role of Oswald" in Ibsen's *Ghosts*, he should have remembered that in fact Oswald is the main character.

Finally, this book must join many others on film-makers. It is an honourable attempt to make the personality of Stroheim known; but, unhappily, it leaves us dissatisfied, waiting for something more.

LOTTE H. EISNER



Eric von Stroheim.

**MARILYN MONROE**, by Maurice Zolotow. Illustrated. (W. H. Allen, 25s.) **GARBO**, by Fritiof Billquist. Illustrated. (Arthur Barker, 25s.)

IN THE END HOLLYWOOD belongs to the stars. The beautiful, improbable people with the marquee names and the neuroses and the special quality that the realists define as box-office appeal. It's no coincidence that, when the stars incorporated themselves and started living grey-flannel lives, Hollywood lost the glamour and fascination it had exercised for thirty years.

Yet the film star, more discussed, exposed and written about than any other public celebrity, remains an enigma, defying analysis, because the appeal itself—beyond talent or beauty—is largely inexplicable. These two biographies—of the greatest star of Hollywood's heyday and the only truly grandiose star of its decline—attempt to dig into the mystery. One (the Garbo book) is deeply unsuccessful—trite, anecdotal and unrevealing. But the Marilyn Monroe biography is a fairly serious bid to answer the three vital questions. Why is she a star? What is the something that places her in a class apart? How did she become the personality she is today? Its conclusions are, on the whole, satisfyingly conclusive.

The comparison with Garbo is inevitable. It occurs often in Maurice Zolotow's book. Joshua Logan, for instance, regards Monroe as "an artist beyond artistry; she has the unfathomable mysteriousness of a Garbo." Both exasperated Hollywood almost beyond the point of endurance. After the initial star-building period, both engaged in long-drawn-out battles with their respective studios for better parts and better pay. Their nuisance value was exceeded only by their box-office value. Both are intuitive actresses, not professionals in the sense that Bette Davis or Joan Crawford are professional. It explains why neither could or would appear on the stage. Their lack of technical professionalism is at once a curse and a blessing. It helped make them greater stars. But it also made the creation of every character before the cameras a harrowing personal experience that inevitably reacted on their private lives. Both started out with the essential drive necessary for stardom: they wanted success desperately.

Here the resemblance ends. Garbo truly wanted "to be alone" and, after the first disastrous publicity campaign to build her up as a sporty type, vigorously dodged the press and public. Fritiof Billquist's biography merely states the fact frequently, without attempting to explain it. Monroe often acts convincingly as if she



loathes the adulation and the attendant publicity. (She has been even more inventive than Garbo about her incognito travelling names, "Zelda Zonk" being a particularly choice pseudonym.) But her grim, illegitimate childhood, when she was farmed out to unfeeling foster parents, violated and generally misused, coupled with her battle for survival in the Hollywood jungle later on, had left its mark. So had the fear of insanity, a legacy of her mother's history of mental illness.

The need for love, which in Monroe's vocabulary meant trust and devotion, made her shamelessly "milk" her unloved childhood for sympathy. She is still bemused by the beauty that originally made her dreams of stardom come true. It accounts largely for her peculiar ideas of punctuality. Late for a scene in *Bus Stop*, she was discovered by Logan gazing abstractedly at her own reflection in the mirror. She imagined vendettas where possibly none existed. Her distrust of Darryl Zanuck, for instance, in the early days was almost pathological.

Yet the image that lingers from this readable biography is of Monroe after the spectacular premiere of *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, which set the seal on her success. She had spent over six hours being groomed for the occasion. She was invited to many supper parties after the film, at which she would certainly have been the guest of honour. But she refused the invitations. She returned to the studios, took off her make-up, changed into slacks and sports shirt and went off for a solitary drive by the sea.

There doesn't seem to be any record that Garbo and Monroe have ever met. If they should, the aloof Swede and the Los Angeles waif would no doubt recognise a kindred soul.

MARGARET HINXMAN

## CORRESPONDENCE

### Form and Content

*The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND*

SIR,—The problems of commitment and of form versus content, recently raised in *SIGHT AND SOUND*, will never be solved until critics do some clear thinking. It is senseless to search for a special aesthetic for the cinema: if the cinema is an art (and assuredly it is) it already has an aesthetic—the one which pertains to all the arts. All the cinema needs is the detailed elaboration of the general principles in terms of cinematographic technique. This, in all conscience, is a big enough task. What is this aesthetic?

You will appreciate that space prevents me from giving more than general indications. Brevity forces me to appear more dogmatic than I would normally choose.

Art is not conceptual knowledge nor an extension of practical experience; but it may be concerned with both. Art is not useful except in a special sense. These negative attributes are usually misunderstood. It is not that art excludes ideas, morality, usefulness; simply that these are not the prerequisites of art. When present they are not the essence of art but the materials from which it is fashioned.

Art transcends the division of form and content: it lies in the organic unity formed by its component parts. The plot of a film is no more than one among many elements comprising the organic unity. In the cinema, and quite inseparable from plot ultimately, other elements will be composition, editing, acting, sound-track and the rest. It is a characteristic of art that it demands a synoptic response: perfection is the degree to which awareness of the total conception is not blurred if we concentrate on the parts. Equally, there should be no fading of definition in the parts when we concentrate on the whole.

The total organic unity is what the film is "about." One may agree or disagree with this; one may discuss the themes that the film suggests. But interesting and profitable as agreement, disagreement and discussion along these lines undoubtedly is, such activity is not the same as assessing artistic success.

If the technical brilliance of a film is not commensurate with its other characteristics, it will be, in varying degrees, an artistic failure. There is no sensible standard by which to judge the quality of style except that which is based on its aptness for the expression of the content. Even this is a critical over-simplification. No artist performs two processes: one, conceive an abstract idea, two, find a

form to clothe it. Even supposing it were hypothetically possible, the form would become an integral part, not of the abstract idea, but of a slightly different and new idea. To put it in an over-simplified form, it is impossible in art to create precisely the same response in two different ways. Change the form, change the idea.

A film with a committed theme may or may not be a work of art. If it is, it will not be *because* it is committed. Similarly, many films which are not committed, even those opposed to the views of those who believe in commitment, may be works of art.

It is obviously legitimate for an artist to interest himself exclusively in creating "committed" art. But no critic should limit himself to commending "committed" work and claim to be applying genuine aesthetic criteria.

Finally, art is useful primarily in this sense: that we need to be more fully alive, more completely receptive emotionally and intellectually, if we are to respond synoptically. This is the chief reason, I suggest, why art should be valued.

Yours faithfully,

S. JOHN HOLYOAKE.

179 Pineapple Road,  
Birmingham, 30.

### Oxford Opinion

SIR,—In her article *The Critical Question*, Penelope Houston credited us with a number of ideas that were never expressed in *Oxford Opinion*. The cumulative effect was to make it appear that we had adopted an extremist position. We have never suggested that "script, story, acting performances, subject generally" are irrelevant or that "social significance is a bore." Our aesthetic was not "constructed around an appreciation of *Crimson Kimono*, or *Party Girl* or *Written on the Wind*." At least one of us didn't appreciate *Party Girl* and *Crimson Kimono*. No-one said Fuller's film was a masterpiece. Our only reference to *Written on the Wind* was to say that we had not seen it.

Miss Houston adopted a more sophisticated tactic in her quotation of isolated sentences in order to construct an image of *Oxford Opinion's* writers as nihilists, sadists, and beats. Another quotation, which originally concerned an N.F.T. programme note on *The Grapes of Wrath*, was transformed into a petulant attack upon the film itself. This enabled Miss Houston to ask "whether the mistrust is of committed criticism or committed cinema." In fact we had said that we thought "commitment essential for the film-maker, but fatal to the critic."

Elsewhere the misrepresentation is merely absurd. "Cinema," we learn, "is about the human situation, not about 'spatial relationships'." But films are not necessarily about anything as grandiose as "the human situation" (think of *Singin' in the Rain*, or *Le Merle* or *Entr'acte*). In *Oxford Opinion* we referred to the structure of images only when we felt that it was dramatically significant. The cinema is not about spatial relationships, any more than it is about editing or décor or acting. All these are a film-maker's means of expression, and should therefore be the concern of any serious critic.

Having given a misleading report of our ideas, Miss Houston goes on to explain the attitude of the younger critics by a half-baked sociological comparison with those of her own generation. All we require, apparently, is "Art . . . for kicks: films that stab at the nerves . . . Violence on the screen is accepted as a stimulant." Happily Miss Houston's generation was saved from all this by the war "when violence was perhaps too close to be also a handy stimulant."

If an explanation of *Oxford Opinion's* attitude is required it is more likely to be found between the covers of *SIGHT AND SOUND* than in a saga of Modern Youth. Our reaction was provoked by *SIGHT AND SOUND's* influence over "serious" film criticism in Britain. During the past five years the magazine has retreated further and further from the difficult business of coming to grips with the most complex of art forms, and has hidden instead behind a screen of well-meaning "liberal" clichés. Its reviews became increasingly dull and unhelpful. They were filled with the sort of sloppy thinking displayed in Miss Houston's confusion of story with subject—not the same thing in the cinema, or any other narrative art. For example, the story of *The Criminal* centres on a race-track robbery, but this is certainly not the subject of the film.

Our aim was to write about films themselves rather than about their vaguer implications. We were concerned first of all with what the director was actually doing on the screen, with his method of achieving his effects and meanings. Miss Houston's picture of "reviewing a film in terms of half a dozen striking shots" is a caricature of a not unusual descriptive technique—using particular examples to illustrate general points.



Our criticism has always been descriptive rather than evaluative. When we make value judgments we try not to take into account whether we agree with what the film is saying. It is probably this approach which has led Miss Houston (and therefore other critics) into saying that we refuse to talk about meaning. Could it be that critics who judge films on their content have come to bother so little about form and style that they now expect those of us who are interested in form to affect a similar apathy to content?

Yours faithfully,

3 Antrim Mansions,  
London, N.W.3.

IAN CAMERON  
MARK SHIVAS  
V. F. PERKINS

PENELOPE HOUSTON writes: *I am sorry that Oxford Opinion's contributors feel my article misinterpreted their point of view. But at the end of the disputed passage on Grapes of Wrath, for instance, the words "don't ask me to sit through it" did appear. It was because I wasn't sure just what was not to be "sat through"—the comment, or the film, or the kind of film the comment conjured up—that I put my own comment in the form of a question. Elsewhere Mr. Cameron has written (and I hope I'm not misquoting him) that he finds it impertinent to judge a film in terms of anything but its style. But style, after all, is a means rather than an end. It is not a matter of "agreeing with what the film is saying", but of bringing one's own values into play in attempting to elucidate what it's saying. And I can't help feeling that the boundary between "descriptive" and "evaluative" criticism is perhaps rather more fluid than the Oxford Opinion writers seem to find it.*

### Wild Strawberries

SIR,—May I correct a number of errors in Miss McCann's curious article on *Wild Strawberries*?

In Borg's first dream, Miss McCann has telescoped two figures: the "blank, puffed-out face" belongs to a man on a street corner who collapses and turns to liquid when Borg touches him; the man in the coffin is Borg himself. Where does Miss McCann find the "hint" that Borg's wife was burnt? She confuses Borg's daydream at the strawberry patch with his later nightmare in the car: an unpardonable error since the difference in tone between the two is so significant, the daydream being all light, and contrived sentiment (Borg's consciousness is still in partial control), the nightmare all darkness and disturbing truth. The episodes of the cradle and the *diner à deux* both occur in the latter, Borg hovering over the empty cradle after the baby has been retrieved; the daydream ends with the girls' conversation on the stairs, which Miss McCann doesn't mention.

It is a year since I last saw the film, but I believe the following to be a more accurate account of the dream in the car, of central importance.

- (1) Flocks of birds sweep across the sky.
- (2) The strawberry-patch. The strawberries lie spilt. Sara shows Borg himself in a mirror and tells him to smile.
- (3) She goes to get the baby from its cradle under the trees. Borg follows.
- (4) She comforts the baby in her arms, telling it not to fear the night, then carries it indoors.
- (5) Borg looks into the empty cradle, then follows her.
- (6) He sees Sara welcomed by his brother—it is not a "lovers' tryst", they are obviously married.
- (7) Shut out, he becomes aware of the moon, which seems to fix him with a supernatural stare. He tries to shield himself.
- (8) Through a window, he watches Sara and his brother. She plays the opening bars of the 8th fugue of Bach's 48 (the E flat minor), then goes to join her husband at table. The theme is taken up by the background music: Bach fugue is as central to the structural procedure of *Wild Strawberries* as Mozart opera (*Figaro* and *Zauberflöte*) was to *Smiles of a Summer Night*.
- (9) Trying to see more, Borg places his hand over a protruding nail and works it up and down (he wants to see himself as a martyr).
- (10) His subconscious won't let him off so easily. The window is blackened out, and in place of Sara appears the Catholic husband of the road accident, identified as Borg's alter ego.
- (11) Borg is thus led in to be examined by himself. He fails to read unintelligible writing, can see nothing in a microscope but the reflection of his own eye, and diagnoses the examiner's wife as dead, whereupon she laughs hysterically, laughter soon identified as that of Borg's own wife.
- (12) He is taken out to watch his wife and her lover, as he watched them years before. He stands beside a burnt ladder, which we

have previously seen unburnt leaning against a tree in the real-life scene where Borg and Marianne arrive at the house. (13) Borg is sentenced to *Ensamhet* (Aloneness).

It seems strange that Miss McCann fails to mention Borg's final dream, where the old man, who has just made overtures to reconciliation with his son, discovers a charitable tenderness towards his parents, and wakes up at peace with himself, "brought to clarity and reconciliation" (Bergman's words, and what the film is after all about).

Yours faithfully,

Dartington Hall School,  
Totnes,  
Devon.

ROBIN WOOD.

### Jazz on a Summer's Day

SIR,—I have just read your review of Bert Stern's chi-chi, Vogue's-eye view of the Newport Jazz Festival. In it, Phillip Riley finds the atmosphere to be "jazz, just jazz". Allow me to point out several errors that, I think, disqualify Mr. Riley's judgment:

- (1) Diana Washington should read Dinah Washington.
- (2) The "Mickey Mouse" Ivy League Dixieland Band can hardly be "beat"! Their inclusion was surely the most objectionable part of the film.
- (3) Anita Ellis, not Anita O'Day, sang the "theme" to *Pull My Daisy*.

If any credit can be given to this film, it can be given to the inventive editing of film editor Aram Avakian, brother of well-known jazz historian and critic George Avakian. He brings a true appreciation of jazz to his cutting technique.

Anita Ellis, incidentally, occupies a unique position in film history. For years she was the best known of the singing dubbers in Hollywood. She has dubbed for, among others, Jeanne Crain (*Gentlemen Marry Brunettes*) and Rita Hayworth (including the memorable "Put the Blame on Mame" in *Gilda*). She is now doing club dates and records and receiving some deserved, and long due, credit.

Yours faithfully,

Advanced School for Cultural Analysis,  
Nell Gwynn House,  
Sloane Avenue,  
London, S.W.3.

E. F. MEDARD.

### Notes from Calcutta

SIR,—In the "Notes from Calcutta" published in your Winter 1960-61 issue I have been erroneously referred to as the joint scriptwriter of Satyajit Ray's Bengali film *Pather Panchali*. Actually, I worked on the said film only as an assistant director. *Pather Panchali*'s script was done entirely by Ray himself. And I personally consider him as the best director-scenarist in India as yet.

Incidentally, I would like to express my admiration for the excellent review of *Jalsaghar* and *The World of Apu* done by Mr. John Gillett in the same issue. While I wholly agree with him regarding the weaknesses pointed out, as for instance, the final horse-ride scene of *Jalsaghar* and Apu's destruction of his manuscript, his comments on *Parash Pathar* (the *Philosopher's Stone*)

### Foreign Language Films with English Titles

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**St. Trinian's**

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aply illustrate the understandable inability of Europeans to appreciate it. The suggestive, subtle, sophisticated satire of the film is bound to be missed by foreigners who are not immersed in the middle class social attitudes and nuances of Bengal conditioned by two hundred years of British rule. In my opinion *Parash Pathar* is one of the most sophisticated and effective satires produced by world cinema up to now.

Yours faithfully,  
ASHIS BARMAN.

54/C Paddapur Road,  
Calcutta 20,  
India.

### The Last of Puerilescu

SIR,—I was naturally pleased to join in the Puerilescu fun, but not altogether prepared for the correspondence I received after my letter was published in your last issue.

Three perfectly genuine enquiries reached me from abroad—one from an American specialised distributor, another from the representative of an international film festival, the third from a film archive. Puerilescu had clearly stimulated interest, so much so that I was even asked for the scripts of his films together with stills. A fourth letter, by the way, was also delivered in my absence and was given back to the postman with a sharp "no one here of that name". I have a nasty feeling that this was probably from Puerilescu himself.

I find it surprising that, although it is evidently widely read, SIGHT AND SOUND is not fully read; had my correspondents gone on to the editorial footnote to my letter, they could have avoided the embarrassment of having been "had".

Yours faithfully,  
DAVID G. MOORE  
(alias Dinu Martell).

63 Chester Road,  
Highgate,  
London, N.19.

TO AVOID CONFUSION AMONG some of our foreign readers, we would like to make it clear that the London School of Film Technique, whose advertisement appears on page ii, is an independent organisation for which the British Film Institute has no responsibility.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Stills:  
20th CENTURY-FOX for *Sanctuary*, *The Innocents*.  
UNITED ARTISTS for *The Misfits*, *The Facts of Life*.  
COLUMBIA PICTURES for *La Dolce Vita*.  
WARNER-PATHÉ for *Look Back in Anger*, *Sunrise at Campobello*, *Too Hot to Handle*.  
BRITISH LION for *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, *A Bout de Souffle*.  
CURZON FILM DISTRIBUTORS for *Les Quatre Cents Coups*.  
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UNITED ARTISTS/UNITALIA FILM for *La Notte*.  
UNITALIA FILM for *Rocco and his Brothers*.  
FILMS DE FRANCE for *Smiles of a Summer Night*.  
ELITE FILM/COLUMBIA PICTURES for *La Récréation*.  
PROCINEX for *Une Aussi Longue Absence*.  
DEUTSCHE FILM HANSA for *Das Wunder des Malachias*.  
SATYAJIT RAY PRODUCTIONS for *Devi*, *The Three Daughters*.  
INSTITUTO CUBANO DEL ARTE E INDUSTRIA CINEMATOGRAFICOS for *Historias de la Revolución*.  
SHAKESPEARE MEMORIAL THEATRE for *Othello*.  
KEYSTONE for *Magic Lantern*.  
LEWIS MORLEY for *Billy Liar*, photograph of Mary Ure.  
LINDSAY ANDERSON for photograph of Albert Finney.  
NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE for *Bulldog Jack*, *Door with Seven Locks*, *Young and Innocent*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *Sabotage*, *Lucrece Borgia*, *Time in the Sun*, *Le Chien Andalou*, photographs of Eisenstein and von Stroheim.

### CORRESPONDENTS

HOLLYWOOD: Albert Johnson	SCANDINAVIA: Erik Ulrichsen
NEW YORK: Cecile Starr	SPAIN & PORTUGAL: Francisco Aranda
ITALY: Robert Hawkins	POLAND: Boleslaw Michalek
FRANCE: Louis Marcorelles	

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### TALKING ABOUT ACTING

*continued from page 61*

URE: I didn't quite get what you meant about folk acting. Folk has such a country dancing sort of suggestion.

FINNEY: I meant really a feeling of locality. Usually, in the theatre and the cinema, you get a middle-class style of acting, which means that when people are playing a working-class character they send it up, they don't act it. They're illustrating all the time how uncivilised the character is, how animal he is, and that is what they make the audience aware of. But it's not really true: it's not playing the character. Good regional acting ought to help to get away from this.

MARCORELLES: When you're acting in certain plays, you speak a kind of theatre English. In the cinema you use different intonations, and you are bound in a way to be more realistic. Can you switch easily from one to another?

URE: I can't separate the two, because basically one wants to be realistic in the theatre as well. It's the degree of intensity.

FINNEY: Realism and truth can be two inches in diameter, but they can also be a foot... It's fascinating, anyhow, this business of accents—working on a different accent. It's really a great advantage, though it's usually treated as a disadvantage.

MARCORELLES: You agree, I think, on one final point: that actors must play a creative part in the making of a film.

FINNEY: After all, the people whose faces are on the screen or the stage when the audience is there *are* the actors. And if, during the time he's rehearsing, the actor doesn't feel that what he's doing is right, somehow that is going to affect the moment when the audience sees him. He mustn't be pampered, and of course he must be directed. But he should be able to act from the strength of saying "Well, they're going to be seeing me, so..."

MARCORELLES: Some film-makers—Bresson, for instance, or Antonioni—take the view that actors should be used. They want to play on their nerves and emotions, but they don't want the actor to have any real say in the creative process.

FINNEY: Well, quite a lot of actors don't think! And as long as they employ them and not me, that's fine.

### ONE PATH TO COLOUR

*(continued from page 86)*

with the blackness that floods the interior of the cathedral, where the blacker blacks of their shadows, mingled with a scarcely audible moan, are swallowed up in the darkness of the belly of the night's cathedral along with the helpless, pathetic yet appealing Vladimir...

Colour: clean, bright, resounding, ringing. When did I fall in love with it? Where?

I feel dull when I do not see on my desk, shining side by side, the blue and yellow pencils, or when the red pillow with the green stripes is not lying on the blue divan. When my motley dressing-gown isn't there to dazzle... And how pleased I feel when the striped ribbon of Filipino lace curls about and lies across the bright Uzbek bedspread. Or the embroidered Mongolian pattern stretches across the darkly crimson background of the wall which is so effectively punctuated by the Mexican white paper emblem of Death Day, and the other black mask with its bloody wounds, unexpectedly wandering this far from the semi-ritual world of the Mexican Indians.

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# A GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Films of special interest to SIGHT AND SOUND readers are denoted by one, two, three or four stars

**ALAMO, THE** (United Artists) Producer-director-star John Wayne's \$12-million monument to the handful of men who saved Texas from the Mexicans in 1836. Plainly inspirational, in a disquieting kind of way; otherwise one more rough-house Western with rock'n'roll interruptions. (Richard Widmark, Laurence Harvey, Frankie Avalon. Technicolor, Todd-AO.)

**ALL IN A NIGHT'S WORK** (Paramount) Mildly amusing but heavily handled story about a case of suspected blackmail, benefiting from an energetic infusion of Shirley MacLaine. Some bright cracks on the hazards of running a magazine empire, much bedroom innuendo. (Dean Martin, Charlie Ruggles, Cliff Robertson; director, Joseph Anthony. Technicolor.)

\*\*\*\***AVVENTURA, L'** (Mondial) A yachting week-end; a disappearance; a search which becomes an investigation into some meanings of love. The range of enquiry in Antonioni's film is that of the novel, the means are triumphantly and entirely those of the cinema. (Monica Vitti, Gabriele Ferzetti.)

\***BEN-HUR** (M-G-M) Out of 5 years' preparation, 6½ months' shooting at Cinecittà, 40,000 tons of sand and a sea of blood and Camera 65 celluloid, director William Wyler has fished a memorable 9-minute chariot race, some Victorian scripture-book frescoes and an unexpectedly forceful Messala from Stephen Boyd. (Charlton Heston, Jack Hawkins, Hugh Griffith, Haya Harareet. Technicolor, Panavision.)

\***CAGED** (Cross Channel) Renato Castellani's *Nella Città L'Inferno*: a mechanically staged film about a woman's prison, acted for a good deal more than one suspects it to be worth by Anna Magnani. (Giulietta Masina, Myriam Bru.) Reviewed.

**CANADIANS, THE** (Fox) Three Mounties rescue a white squaw from American marauders and prevent a Sioux uprising. A limp and laggard trail across some villainously photographed landscapes. (Robert Ryan, John Dehner, Teresa Stratas; director, Burt Kennedy. DeLuxe Color, CinemaScope.)

**CIMARRON** (M-G-M) New version of Edna Ferber's novel about the opening up of Oklahoma in the 'eighties. Splendid land-rush scenes, but once Maria Schell becomes editor of the *Oklahoma Wigwag* it's a case of reality dogged by absurdity. (Glenn Ford, Anne Baxter, Russ Tamblyn; director, Anthony Mann. Metrocolor, CinemaScope.)

**CROWNING EXPERIENCE, THE** (MRA) Muriel Smith, Moral Re-Armament's magnificent coloured propagandist, combats Communism by singing "Sweet Potato Pie". A feature-length Technicolor tract, rudimentary to say the least. (Ann Buckles, Louis Byles; director, Rickard Tegström.)

\*\*\***DOLCE VITA, LA** (Columbia) Fellini's elaborate, repetitious attack on Roman corruption and decadence. Plenty of extravagant set pieces; not enough detachment. (Marcello Mastroianni, Anouk Aimée, Anita Ekberg, Yvonne Furneaux. Totalscope.)

**DOUBLE BUNK** (British Lion/Bryanston) Comedy about a young couple whose houseboat inadvertently takes them to Calais. Not without spirit, though there's rather too much water with it. (Ian Carmichael, Janette Scott, Sidney James; director, C. M. Pennington-Richards.)

**DURING ONE NIGHT** (Gala) Gala's first production, the story of an American airman's search for love and courage in wartime England, written and directed by Sidney J. Furie in the TV style of his first film. Innocent, for the most part embarrassingly so, but there's still a grain of truth beneath all those inarticulate pauses. (Don Borisenko, Susan Hampshire, Sean Sullivan.)

\***FACTS OF LIFE, THE** (United Artists) Bob Hope and Lucille Ball trying to conduct a suburban love affair, with every meeting ending in catastrophe. Mild, middle-aged and quietly funny comedy, played with irresistible professionalism. (Don De Fore, Ruth Hussey; director, Melvin Frank.) Reviewed.

**FIERCEST HEART, THE** (Fox) Maltreated British private deserts and leads a wagon train of Boers to their "promised land" (in fact a particularly hideous painted backdrop). Robust but glum, like Stuart Whitman's hero. (Juliet Prowse, Raymond Massey; director, George Sherman. DeLuxe Color, CinemaScope.)

**FURY AT SMUGGLERS BAY** (Regal International) Bernard Lee's gang of cut-throat wreckers put paid to by handsome son (John Fraser) of ominously dutiful Squire (Peter Cushing). Thin-blooded British swashbuckler, attractively set in Cornwall. (Director, John Gilling. Eastman Colour, Panascope.)

**GO NAKED IN THE WORLD** (M-G-M) Or simply ring Butterfield 9. (Gina Lollobrigida, Anthony Franciosa, Ernest Borgnine; director, Randal MacDougall. Metrocolor, CinemaScope.)

**GRASS IS GREENER, THE** (Rank) Comedy about a countess, her husband and an American oil man, directed by Stanley Donen as though he were trying to see how stagy a film he could make. Jean Simmons collects the laughs; Cary Grant and Deborah Kerr do the talking. (Robert Mitchum. Technicolor, Technirama.)

**HELL TO ETERNITY** (Fox) Lachrymose family episodes and Marine Corps battle scenes prolong the allegedly true story of how a Japanese-reared American private captured 2,000 Japanese. (Jeffrey Hunter, Vic Damone, Sessue Hayakawa; director, Phil Karlson.)

\*\*\***MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, THE** (United Artists) John Sturges' re-make, in a Mexican setting, of *The Seven Samurai*. As a contemplation on the violent life it tries too hard to be profound; as a Western it's too laundered and balletic; but as a whole, and thanks to an honest supporting cast, it's both likeable and impressive. (Yul Brynner, Horst Buchholz, Eli Wallach. DeLuxe Color, Panavision.) Reviewed.

\***MARK, THE** (Fox) Young business man convicted of an attempted sex crime tries to re-establish himself, with unwelcome attentions from the local press. Rod Steiger is a sympathetic psychiatrist, but the case-history approach might have reached further if the real problem had not been dodged. (Stuart Whitman, Maria Schell; director, Guy Green. CinemaScope.)

\*\*\***MISFITS, THE** (United Artists) Arthur Miller's story of lost child divorcee (Marilyn Monroe) and three cowboys searching for a meaning in life. They find it in a brilliant sequence of a mustang round-up, but by this time the symbolism is running wilder than the horses. (Clark Gable, Montgomery Clift, Eli Wallach; director, John Huston.)

**PEPE** (Columbia) Cantinflas and an eccentric white stallion on a 3-hour Hollywood celebrity chase. Paralyzing if you don't happen to be an autograph-hunter. (Dan Dailey, Shirley Jones; director, George Sidney. Technicolor, CinemaScope.)

\***RAT RACE, THE** (Paramount) Fairy tale of old New York, with Tony Curtis as a struggling saxophonist, Debbie Reynolds as a dance hostess, up against the Big City. Garson Kanin's script can be funny and observant, but neither he nor the director holds the clichés at bay. (Jack Oakie; director, Robert Mulligan.)

\***REBEL, THE** (Warner-Pathé) Tony Hancock as a paint-crazed insurance clerk, unwitting originator of the Infantlist School. Hancock's dilapidated grandeur and truculent self-absorption are fine, though the film gives him too much ground to cover and not enough help over it. (George Sanders, Paul Massie; director, Robert Day. Technicolor.)

\***SANCTUARY** (Fox) Skeletal attempt to film William Faulkner's horror tale of sin and salvation: a standard jugful of Mississippi discontent. (Lee Remick, Yves Montand, Bradford Dillman; director, Tony Richardson. CinemaScope.) Reviewed.

**SINS OF RACHEL CADE, THE** (Warner-Pathé) Imitation *Nun's Story*, with Angie Dickinson bringing religion, medicine and a guilt complex to a pre-war Congo village. Earnest but uninspired weepie, with an effective moment or two from Peter Finch. (Roger Moore; director, Gordon Douglas. Technicolor.)

\*\*\***SO CLOSE TO LIFE** (Contemporary) Ingmar Bergman's 1957 drama of tragic childbirths, shot entirely in the wards and delivery room of a maternity hospital. Melodramatics, hollowly inclined philosophising, and a somewhat grinding immobility are offset by the performances of Eva Dahlbeck, Bibi Andersson and Ingrid Thulin. Reviewed.

**SOUTH PACIFIC** (Fox) High, wide and generally unhandsome version of the stage musical, stodgily directed by Joshua Logan. Happily the songs survive a welter of eccentric colour effects and jungle décor. (Rossano Brazzi, Mitzi Gaynor, John Kerr. Technicolor, Todd-AO.)

\***SPARTACUS** (Rank) Howard Fast's story about Rome's slave uprising offers Stanley Kubrick the chance of an ambivalent dip into the blood-red waters of commercial Hollywood spectacle. With Laurence Olivier, Charles Laughton and Peter Ustinov on hand, the acting (and Rome) come off an indisputable best. (Kirk Douglas, Jean Simmons, John Gavin. Technicolor, Super Technirama-70.)

**SUBTERRANEANS, THE** (M-G-M) Leslie Caron and George Peppard cruelly wasted on a silly, psychotically trimmed novelette about the "new bohemians" of San Francisco's North Beach area. (Janice Rule, Roddy McDowall; director, Randal MacDougall. Technicolor, CinemaScope.)

\***SUNRISE AT CAMPOBELLO** (Warner-Pathé) Adulatory account of Franklin Roosevelt's conquest of polio, part patriotic myth, part soap opera, and wholly Dore Schary—adapted from his prizewinning play. (Ralph Bellamy, Greer Garson; director, Vincent J. Donohue.) Reviewed.

**SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON** (Disney) Photogenic tropical idyll for the under-twelves, as innocently and amusingly improbable as the book. (James MacArthur, John Mills, Dorothy McGuire; director, Ken Annakin. Technicolor, Panavision.)

**TORMENT** (Gala) Husband broods, wife drinks, maid schemes, all in a glass-walled luxury house in a beat-up Paris neighbourhood. Glossily pretentious agony piece, rather as though Grace Metalious had got herself up to look like Ibsen. (Michèle Morgan, Robert Hossein, Perrette Pradier; director, Robert Hossein.)

\*\*\***TROU, LE** (Gala) Becker's last film, the absorbing account of an abortive prison escape which slowly turns into a classic study in masculine idealism and betrayal. (Philippe Leroy, Mark Michel, Jean Kéraudy, Michel Constantin, Raymond Meunier.) Reviewed.

\***WHERE THE BOYS ARE** (M-G-M) Engaging, if finally frantic, study of North American undergraduates' emotional tangles during their annual Easter vacation down in Florida; fundamentally phony, but distinguished by occasional wit and boundless vitality. (Dolores Hart, George Hamilton; director, Henry Levin. Metrocolor, CinemaScope.)

**WORLD OF SUZIE WONG, THE** (Paramount) Uninteresting, badly made love story about a Chinese prostitute, an English drunk, an American architect and a baby killed by a landslide. (William Holden, Nancy Kwan, Sylvia Syms, Michael Wilding; director, Richard Quine. Technicolor.)

\***YOUNG HAVE NO MORALS, THE** (SF) Two French boys spend a rough night in search of their ideal girl, only to find a series of reflections of their own hopelessness. Youthfully corrective version of *Les Tricheurs*, one-track minded and unsteady, but with traces of talent. (Jacques Charrier, Belinda Lee, Charles Aznavour, Dany Robin; director, Jean-Pierre Mocky.)



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